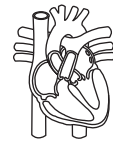


# HEART HEALTH



## Getting In Sync With Jerry West

(NAPSA)—As an NBA all-star player, Jerry West scored more than 25,000 points, received nearly 5,400 rebounds and is credited with about 6,200 assists. As the general manager for the Los Angeles Lakers, Jerry West built an indomitable team and won seven championships. But as a patient with a chronic disease, the symptoms and eventual diagnosis of atrial fibrillation (AFib) brought greater challenges.

The most common form of cardiac arrhythmia, AFib is a condition in which the upper chambers of the heart contract in an uncoordinated and rapid fashion, resulting in a very irregular and fast heart rhythm or beat.

AFib has a low profile among chronic diseases, but it affects 2.5 million Americans and is costly, progressive and often debilitating. It is associated with a fivefold increase in risk for stroke; worsens underlying cardiovascular disease; and doubles the risk of all-cause mortality.

Undiagnosed during his 14-year playing career, West had symptoms but was unaware that they were related to AFib. “I was experiencing all of these warning signs, but instead of speaking up, I just ignored them. My doctors used to say that I had ‘an extra beat in my heart,’ but that was the extent of it.” Ultimately, West was not diagnosed with AFib until age 42.

“It’s like this condition was some sort of secret that people either didn’t understand or didn’t discuss. Meanwhile, I was walking around feeling like there was a ticking time bomb in my chest.”

In 2007, West retired from professional basketball to focus on managing his AFib and regaining control over his life. “It took me a long time to understand what I was dealing with,” said West. “I thought it was normal to feel anxious all the time, and I didn’t realize the impact AFib was having on my health and well-being.”



Not all people with AFib experience symptoms, which can include tiredness or fatigue, feeling of overall weakness, palpitations, irregular heartbeat, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, dizziness, light-headedness, chest pain or discomfort, and heart failure.

As West has noted, AFib’s symptoms can greatly decrease quality of life. Patients with AFib have been found to have significantly reduced quality of life relative to the general population—socially, physically and emotionally. In fact, AFib patients often have either significantly worse or equally decreased quality of life than patients who have had a heart attack. Because of this impact, many AFib patients find

themselves living an “AFib-adjusted life.”

“AFib has an impact on your enjoyment of life that is hard to measure and hard to track,” said West.

To raise awareness about the chronic, progressive nature of AFib, West partnered with AF Stat™: A Call to Action for Atrial Fibrillation, a collaboration of health care leaders and organizations working to improve the health and well-being of people affected by AFib. AF Stat, an initiative sponsored by sanofi-aventis, is raising awareness of AFib and is calling for and helping promote a change in attitudes and behaviors to enhance AFib understanding, diagnosis and management.

The AF Stat Working Group consists of public and private-sector organizations responsible for addressing the policy, management, quality and education gaps regarding AFib.

As West’s story illustrates, there is a great lack of knowledge and resources surrounding AFib and its overall effect on patients. AF Stat is raising awareness through personal stories straight from the people who know it best—fellow AFib patients. If you want to share your story like West, log on to [www.AFStat.com](http://www.AFStat.com).

AF Stat™: A Call to Action for Atrial Fibrillation is an initiative sponsored by sanofi-aventis U.S. LLC.