

## Mortality among Albertans with Atrial Fibrillation

### By Age Group, Alberta, 2011

Atrial fibrillation (AF) is a common form of arrhythmia (irregular heartbeat) that is often characterized by symptoms such as heart palpitations, weakness, shortness of breath, light headedness and chest pain. A heart with AF beats inefficiently resulting in poor blood flow to the body, and can lead to complications such as stroke and heart failure.

Today's edition of *Health Trends Alberta* compares the mortality rates of Albertans with non-valvular AF to those without. Non-valvular AF refers to AF among people without either a previous diagnosis of mitral valve disease or valve surgery. The case definition for AF excludes people with only "single episodes" of AF in an attempt to exclude stand-alone cases and consider only chronic cases.

### Mortality rates higher among Albertans diagnosed with AF

In 2011, just over one per cent of Albertans (0.91 per cent for female versus 1.13 per cent for males) had been diagnosed with AF. Prevalence of AF is significantly higher as age increases (6.2 per cent for people over 65 years of age). In 2011, more than 6,300 Albertans were diagnosed with AF.

Mortality rates among Albertans with AF are higher than for those without AF. The relative risk of death associated with having AF decreases with age. A 60 to 64 year old with AF is 4.4 times more likely to die than someone without AF, while an 80 to 84 year old with AF is about twice as likely to die as someone without AF.

Life expectancy of a 50-year old male with AF is 23.9 additional years, compared to 32.4 years for a 50-year old male without AF. Similarly, a 50-year old female with AF can expect to live 24.4 additional years, compared to 36.1 more years for a 50-year old female without AF.

AF cases are more likely to die of cerebrovascular disease or heart failure. Of the 2,757 people with AF aged 65 and over who died in 2011, 234 (8.5 per cent) died of cerebrovascular disease compared to 6.2 per cent for those without AF. Similarly, 3.7 per cent of people aged 65 and over with AF died from heart failure, compared to 2.2 per cent of people without AF.

