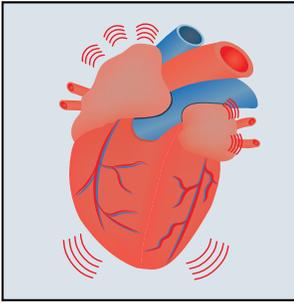


# Atrial Fibrillation Disparities in Medicare Fee-For-Service Beneficiaries



Atrial fibrillation (AF) is the most common type of arrhythmia. Arrhythmia is defined as an irregular heart rhythm or irregular heartbeat. Those living with AF may have symptoms such as heart palpitations, shortness of breath, dizziness, fatigue, and chest pains or may not feel any symptoms at all. AF increases the chance of suffering a stroke. Risk factors for AF include hypertension, diabetes, obesity, and advancing age. Treatments for AF depend on the frequency and severity of symptoms. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in 2018, AF was mentioned on 175,326 death certificates and was the underlying cause of death in 25,845 of those deaths. It is estimated that 12.1 million people in the United States will have AF in 2030.<sup>1</sup>

Data from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' (CMS's) Chronic Conditions Data Warehouse indicates that the prevalence rate of atrial fibrillation among Medicare fee-for-service (FFS) beneficiaries has increased from 7.9% in 2009 to 8.7% in 2018.<sup>2</sup>

**The Mapping Medicare Disparities Tool** developed by CMS Office of Minority Health shows the prevalence of AF among Medicare FFS beneficiaries varied by age, sex, race and ethnicity, eligibility for Medicare and Medicaid, and geographic areas in 2018.<sup>3</sup> Figure 1 shows the age standardized prevalence of AF among FFS beneficiaries by race and ethnicity. It was highest among Whites (9%) compared to American Indians/Alaska Natives (6%), and Asian/Pacific Islanders, Black/African Americans and Hispanics (5%). The prevalence rate of AF increased with the beneficiaries' age as shown in Figure 2, highest among beneficiaries aged 85 and older (19%), followed by age groups 75-84 (12%), 65-74 (5%) and <65 (2%). The prevalence was varied by geographic areas as shown in Figure 3. New Mexico had the lowest rate (5%) and Connecticut had the highest rate (11%) of beneficiaries with AF among the states. Figure 4 shows geographic differences in AF prevalence among minority racial and ethnic groups. American Indian/Alaska Native beneficiaries with AF claims in 2018 were more concentrated in the west, with emphasis around the southwest area and in Oklahoma, while for the Asian/Pacific Islanders, the concentration was along the west coast with small groups throughout the south, northeast, and east north central. For Black/African Americans, it was concentrated in the

Figure 1. Age Standardized Prevalence of AF Among Medicare FFS Beneficiaries by Race/Ethnicity, 2018

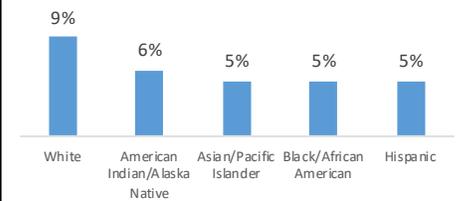


Figure 2. Prevalence of AF Among Medicare FFS Beneficiaries by Age group, 2018

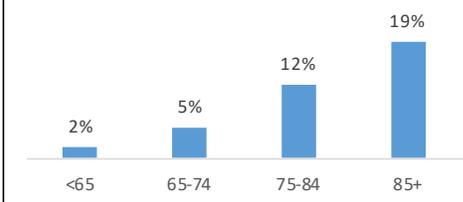
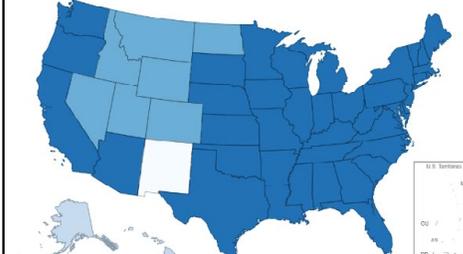
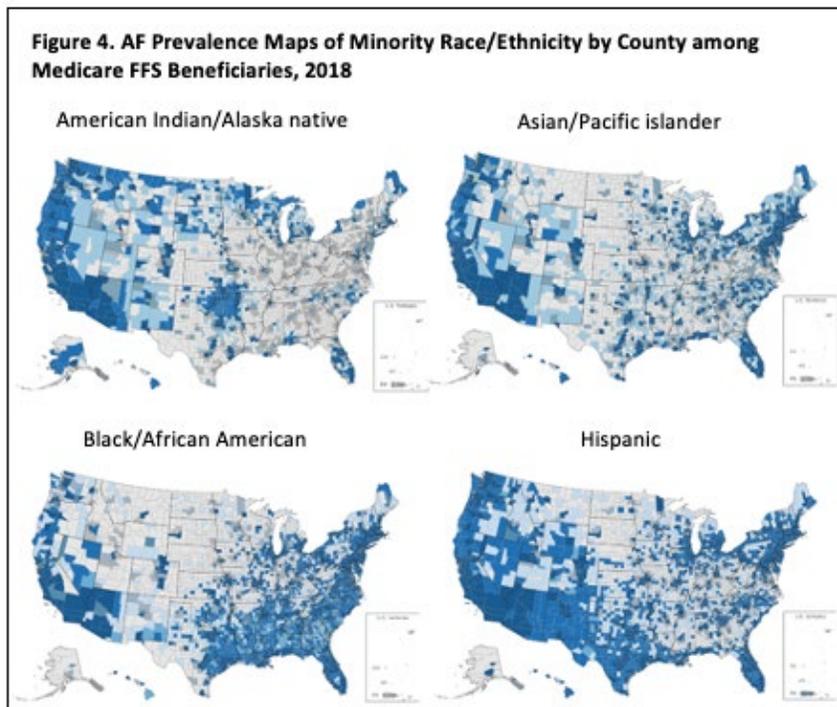


Figure 3. Prevalence of AF Among Medicare FFS Beneficiaries by State, 2018



south and up the middle Atlantic. And lastly, Hispanic beneficiaries with the claims more spread across the country from the west to the south and small groups around east north central and along the east coast.

Atrial fibrillation is treated with lifestyle changes, medicines, and procedures, including surgery, to help prevent blood clots, slow your heart beat, or restore your heart's normal rhythm.<sup>4</sup> Medicare Part B covers cardiovascular behavioral therapy that helps lower the risk for cardiovascular disease, and other Preventive & screening services. Medicare Part D covers AF treatment medications such as beta blockers, calcium channel blockers, antiarrhythmic agents, and blood thinners. September is Atrial Fibrillation Awareness Month, which focuses on increasing the awareness of AF risk factors.



## Beneficiary Resources

- [Medicare and You Handbook](#)
- [Is my test, item, or service covered? - Cardiovascular behavioral therapy](#)
- [What is atrial fibrillation?](#)
- [Living With AF](#)
- [Medicare & You: Heart disease \(video\)](#)

## Provider Resources

- [Arrhythmia \(U.S. National Library of Medicine \[NLM\], MedlinePlus\)](#)
- [CMS: Medicare Chronic Conditions](#)
- [CMS Data Highlight: Prevalence and Health Care Expenditures among Medicare Beneficiaries Aged 65 Years and Over with Heart Conditions](#)
- [CMS-Medicare Learning Network: Medicare Preventive Services](#)

## References/Sources

1. **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.**  
[https://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/atrial\\_fibrillation.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/atrial_fibrillation.htm)
2. **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. Chronic Conditions Data Warehouse.**  
<https://www2.ccwdata.org/web/guest/medicare-charts/medicare-chronic-condition-charts>
3. **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. Mapping Medicare Disparities Tool.**  
<https://data.cms.gov/mapping-medicare-disparities>
4. **National Institutes of Health: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute.**  
<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/af>

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