The effects of preventive counseling with remote support via e-mail on illness perception in patients with paroxysmal atrial fibrillation after catheter ablation

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Background: Illness perception (IP) affects health behaviors and coping strategies in chronic diseases, but our knowledge about IP in atrial fibrillation (AF) patients (pts) after catheter ablation (CA) is limited.

Purpose: To assess the impact of preventive counseling on IP in pts after AF catheter ablation.

Methods: A prospective randomized controlled study with 2 parallel groups of pts with paroxysmal AF after CA (radiofrequency or cryoablation). Pts were randomized (1:1) into 2 groups. Before discharge, both groups received 1 preventive counseling session with focus on their individual risk factors profile. After discharge pts from intervention group received 6 sessions of biweekly remote preventive counseling via e-mail over the first 3 months. Control group received usual care. IP was assessed using The Brief Illness Perception Questionnaire (BIPQ) at baseline and at 3, 6 and 12 months.

Results: A total of 90 pts aged 35 to 80 years were enrolled (mean age, 57.4 ± 9.9 years, men, 52.2%). The groups were well balanced according to demographic and clinical features. At 6 and 12 months of follow-up there was a significant improvement of the overall IP score in the intervention group vs control (table).

Conclusions: Preventive counseling with remote support via e-mail improves IP in AF pts after CA which may contribute to better long term outcomes.

The overall score of IP	Intervention group	Control group	P for change vs baseline
Baseline (points)			
mean ± SD	42.2 ± 10.2	44.4 ± 9.5	n/s
Me (25%; 75%)	44 (35; 48.5)	45 (37; 51.5)	
At 3 months (points)			
mean ± SD	36.8 ± 8.1*	39.7 ± 7.9*	0.055
Me (25%; 75%)	37 (33; 41)	41 (33.5; 47)	
Δ% after 3 months, Me (25%; 75%)	-14.3 (-23.2; 5.2)	-13.0 (-16.8; -4.6)	n/s
At 6 months (points)			
mean ± SD	32.4 ± 7.3*	37.7 ± 8.7*	0.008
Me (25%; 75%)	33 (27; 38)	37 (31; 44.5)	
Δ% after 6 months, Me (25%; 75%)	-24.2 (-33.7; -5.9)	-18.4 (-24.0; -5.9)	0.040
At 12 months (points)			
mean ± SD	29.4 ± 7.6*	36.9 ± 8.2*	<0.001
Me (25%; 75%)	29 (24.5; 33.5)	36 (31; 43)	
Δ% after 12 months, Me	-33.3 (-42.5; -17.1)	-18.4 (-26.4; -7.5)	<0.001

SD – standard deviation, Me – median;* p <0.001 vs baseline within group