

**SURAJ KAPA, M.D.:** Good day, everybody. My name is Suraj Kapa, and I'm a cardiac electrophysiologist at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. Today, we're going to have a little chat about atrial fibrillation. Atrial fibrillation is a very common disease process of the heart, which is characterized by an abnormal rhythm where the heart rate tends to be more rapid than it should be and very irregular. Many people see it as of epidemic proportions. In fact, you probably have a sister, a brother, a father, a mother, a grandparent who has it.

And it's important to know about it, because it can affect both our quality of life as well as alter our risk of events, such as stroke. And we're always looking for better ways to treat patients, to improve their quality of life, to make them more functional, and to make them enjoy their days better. Today, I am joined by Dr. Francisco Lopez-Jimenez, the head of preventive cardiology at Mayo Clinic, Rochester, to talk about some of the novel ways we're using behavioral modification to affect the pathophysiology of atrial fibrillation. Dr. Lopez-Jimenez, nice to see you.

FRANCISCO LOPEZ-JIMENEZ, M.D. Hi, nice to see you. Well, thank you for the invitation. In the last few years, several clinical trials have shown very remarkable results for patients with atrial fibrillation. They have shown that patients who engage in a weight loss program together with an exercise program can actually reduce the odds for having recurrent spells of this irregular heartbeat. In some situations, they actually can prevent the recurrence of these. And at the very least, the number of times they get this irregular heartbeat back goes down significantly. So that's a very remarkable finding. And what is also very remarkable is that particularly overweight or obese individuals do not have to lose a lot of weight. In many cases, the weight loss was very modest. However, even with very modest weight loss, the results were very significant.

**SURAJ KAPA, M.D.:** So that's remarkable-- the fact that just losing a little bit of weight and improving your fitness can affect the atrial fibrillation and the frequency of it. So what are you doing at Mayo Clinic in terms of trying to implement these findings into our practice?

FRANCISCO LOPEZ-JIMENEZ, M.D. Good question. So we have a multidisciplinary team with dietician and exercise specialist and also nurses and other people who help patients with atrial fibrillation get into a dietary program and exercise. We educate people how to do this in a way that is easy and feasible and not necessarily a crazy program that is impossible to implement. So we facilitate this change. And patients actually like it. And they give us very positive feedback. And they like the recommendations that are practical and doable.

**SURAJ KAPA, M.D.:** That sounds phenomenal. And I'm an invasive cardiac electrophysiologist. So one of the questions that comes to my mind-- I'm sure comes to a lot of our viewers' minds-- is this in place of medications? Is this in place of ablation? How do we work this out when you have all these different doctors-- the person doing invasive procedures saying let's do the ablation, the person who deals the medication saying let's do the medication? How does this work with all of those other elements?

FRANCISCO LOPEZ-JIMENEZ, M.D. Well, I think this new finding and the implementation of programs like ours is really a complement. Working in a multi-disciplinary team, we help the electrophysiologist. We help the patients. We are essentially add something more to the best treatment of these individuals. Some of these patients might still require to have other heart procedures. But some of them may not. So we are part of the team helping to provide the best care and trying to reduce the number of times the patients have to have second or third surgeries.

**SURAJ KAPA,  
M.D.:**

And I have to say-- just working with you over the last year or so and developing this program and giving it to our patients, a lot of patients have had extraordinary feedback in terms of the benefit it's giving them. But thank you for joining us today, Dr. Lopez-Jimine, and giving us this important feedback about behavioral modification and atrial fibrillation. And I'd like to thank the viewers as well for joining us today. Again, if you ever have any further questions about atrial fibrillation, you can seek out more on [mayoclinic.org](http://mayoclinic.org) website. Or you can always certainly contact us as well. Thank you.