

16th World Cardiology Congress

December 08-10, 2016 Dubai, UAE



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Fat in the heart: A feature unique to the human species may lead to atrial fibrillation

During a discussion in an international meeting held in Marrakech between Walter Somerville (Editor in Chief of the British Heart Journal) and Jean Francois Goodwin (Father of Cardiomyopathies) it was suggested that some form of “disarray” which is the classical marker of Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy (HCM) can be observed in the normal heart especially on the diaphragmatic aspect of the right ventricle close to the septum. As in disease called Arrhythmogenic right ventricular dysplasia (ARVD) presence of adipocytes was one of the features of this disease, it was logical to check if presence of fat was observable in the right ventricle of a normal individual. This led to the examination of the right ventricle of 82 individuals from 15-75 years old who died of non-cardiac cause in a general hospital of Paris. Surprisingly compact normal myocardium was observed in only 35% of the cases. 61% had significant number of adipocytes dissociating cardiomyocytes without fibrosis and 3.7% had the histologic pattern of RVD and not ARVD since those individuals had non arrhythmias. Therefore, these cases represent the quiescent form of ARVD. It is therefore possible to extrapolate that the same situation exists in the general population as far as atrial dysplasia is concerned. This situation may lead to atrial fibrillation spontaneously because of the anatomic creation of an anatomic substrate or it could be a more stable form which become arrhythmogenic only in case of superimposed myocarditis.

Biography

Guy Hugues Fontaine has written over 990 scientific publications, including over 200 book chapters (number in "text books" Americans). He is one of the 126 greatest cardiologists since the 14th century and one of the 500 Greatest Geniuses of the 21st century. He was the only invitee to a three-week trip in inland China and has attended 11 conferences. He has received Prof. Pierre Rijlant Prize (Brussels) which is equivalent to Nobel Prize in Cardiac Electrophysiology. He is the only Clinician who received it.

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