

HjärtRytmGruppen – focusing on the rhythm in Sweden

Authored by the HRG, working group within the Swedish Society of Cardiology, coordinated by chair Anneli Svensson

The HRG (HjärtRytmGruppen i.e., the HeartRhythmGroup) is the working group on arrhythmia in the Swedish Society of Cardiology (SSC). The group consists of 9 individuals, one from each of the seven university hospitals and two representing county hospitals.

Members in the HRG are elected for 3 years with the possibility of a second period, but not more than 6 years, to keep new individuals and ideas coming. The main part of the participants is on a consultant level, but residents are permitted, and we work together with the EHRA Young EP National Ambassador as the national representative of the EHRA Young EP Community.

The HRG has its [own website](#) under the SSC, and here we post information on everything from upcoming activities to meeting protocols. To facilitate contact all members of the board are presented with photos and email addresses. The HRG board meets virtually every month, and in person twice a year, plus in association with our activities (see below).

The Swedish Society of Cardiology publishes the newspaper “Svensk Kardiologi” (i.e., “Swedish Cardiology”) 4 times a year, and the HRG participates in each edition with for example information on upcoming activities, interviews with profiles in Swedish arrhythmology, and summaries of guidelines and recommendations.

Educational activities

The HRG’s focus is on education, although we participate in many other activities as well. For our educational courses we mainly target residents and consultants in cardiology, but junior /more senior doctors and nurses with an interest in arrhythmia are welcome.

- The “**Temadagar**” (“theme days”) in October is a recurrent event, with a day full of case-based lectures, held weekly in three different cities. Earlier versions have included ventricular arrhythmia in different forms, sudden cardiac death, arrhythmia in pregnancies, long QT-syndrome, management of atrial fibrillation and physical activity in patients with arrhythmia. This year we will focus on case-based ECG interpretation, electrical storm and its management in different settings, POTS and cardiac sarcoidosis. The speakers are both HRG-members, and colleagues outside of HRG, with the aim to provide the most experienced faculty. During Covid-19 the theme days were postponed, as the networking and interaction with the faculty is a key component of the meeting, but now it’s back! We are really looking forward to these highly appreciated and interesting days!
- At the **Swedish Cardiovascular Spring meeting**, the HRG participates by suggesting several symposia each year, of course with a focus on arrhythmia, and the board are active participants with speaker-and moderator roles. In 2023 we held two symposia, one on ECG interpretation (pacemaker ECGs, wide QRS tachycardia ECGs and ECGs in ion channel diseases) that was very well attended and one about the arrhythmic risk in mitral annulus disjunction.

- In February every year, the Swedish Society of Cardiology arrange a two-day course for cardiologists, called **Fortbildningsdagarna** (“continuing education-days”). All working groups participate in these, including the HRG. Together with the “Temadagar” this has often been an excellent opportunity to present and discuss new guidelines and/or recommendations from the ESC or the EHRA or other organizations. This year, based on case-presentations we discussed the ESC Guidelines on ventricular arrhythmia and prevention of sudden cardiac death.
- The HRG has initiated an **EP curriculum for young electrophysiologists-in-training** in Sweden and the second round has just started. This includes at least three on-site visits at selected EP centers in Sweden; the first one took place at Skane University hospital in Lund Oct 2022 and included lectures, discussions and live EP cases covering SVT ablation. The next session which covers AF ablation and how to detect and handle complications will take place during two days at Sahlgrenska University hospital in Gothenburg in Nov 2023. The third and final session is dedicated to ablation of ventricular arrhythmias and will take place at the Karolinska University hospital in Stockholm late 2024. The aim of the program is to offer an interactive education as well as creating opportunities to establish a Swedish network of next generation EP’s, and finally, to visit three large-volume EP centers to see different environments.

Participating in registries

Sweden is well known for high-quality registries in many areas, and these registries have an excellent coverage. The HRG has one representative in the steering committee of the nationwide Swedish ICD and Pacemaker Registry, and one representative in the steering committee of the National Quality Register on Catheter Ablations.

Certification for allied professionals in the field of cardiac pacing

The HRG has highlighted the need for a national, structured, and standardized certification for allied professionals in the field of cardiac pacing. While these healthcare professionals play a crucial role in caring for patients with CIEDs, there is currently no formal recognition of their competence. This results in discrepancies in the quality of care offered to patients and inconsistencies in the professional development and compensation of allied professionals.

To address these issues, the HRG has proposed a 'competence ladder' for allied professionals in the field of cardiac pacing. This proposal outlines the expected level of competence and the required ongoing educational efforts to ensure good quality and equal care. The working group hopes that this framework will stimulate continuous professional development for these allied professionals. Furthermore, we stress that employers should provide opportunities for further training, reward this specialist competence, and encourage certification through the EHRA and/or the International Board of Heart Rhythm Examiners (IBHRE).

Recommendations on competence and volumes for CIED implanters

In 2016, the HRG presented recommendations on competence training for implanters of pacemakers/ICDs, including continuing education and recommended yearly volumes to maintain competence. The yearly implanting volume for a centre to keep performing

implantations was also discussed, though the HRG has no formal mandate to regulate this. In 2020, we followed up with a survey on knowledge of and adherence to the recommendations. All responding implanting centers in Sweden were aware of the recommendations, and though they were not always completely followed, they've had an impact on the training for future CIED implanters and on the discussions about the volumes and number of implanting centers in each region.

Other

The HRG is the sounding board for arrhythmia-related questions from the Swedish Society of Cardiology but also other medical societies and authorities.

In summary – We are an active and engaged working group, with lots of things going on! If the reader has a suggestion for collaboration or new ideas on educational activities going forward, please do not hesitate to contact the HRG member in your region (<https://www.sls.se/SVKF/Arbetsgrupper/Hjartrytmgruppen/>).

Kind regards
HjärtRytmGruppen, via chair Anneli Svensson