

# Pediatric Arrhythmias

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Arrhythmias are common in the general pediatric  
population  
and frequently are an important clinical problem  
in patients with structural congenital heart  
disease

## Arrhythmias

have a broad spectrum of clinical presentations, ranging from no symptoms to sudden death. There is a wide variety of causes of arrhythmias and an even broader range of treatments.

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in correct pediatric ECG interpretation is to consider the clinical condition at the time of recording. Many of the non-cardiac diseases in children may have important effects on the normal ECG; therefore, abnormal ECGs do not always equal to the heart disease.

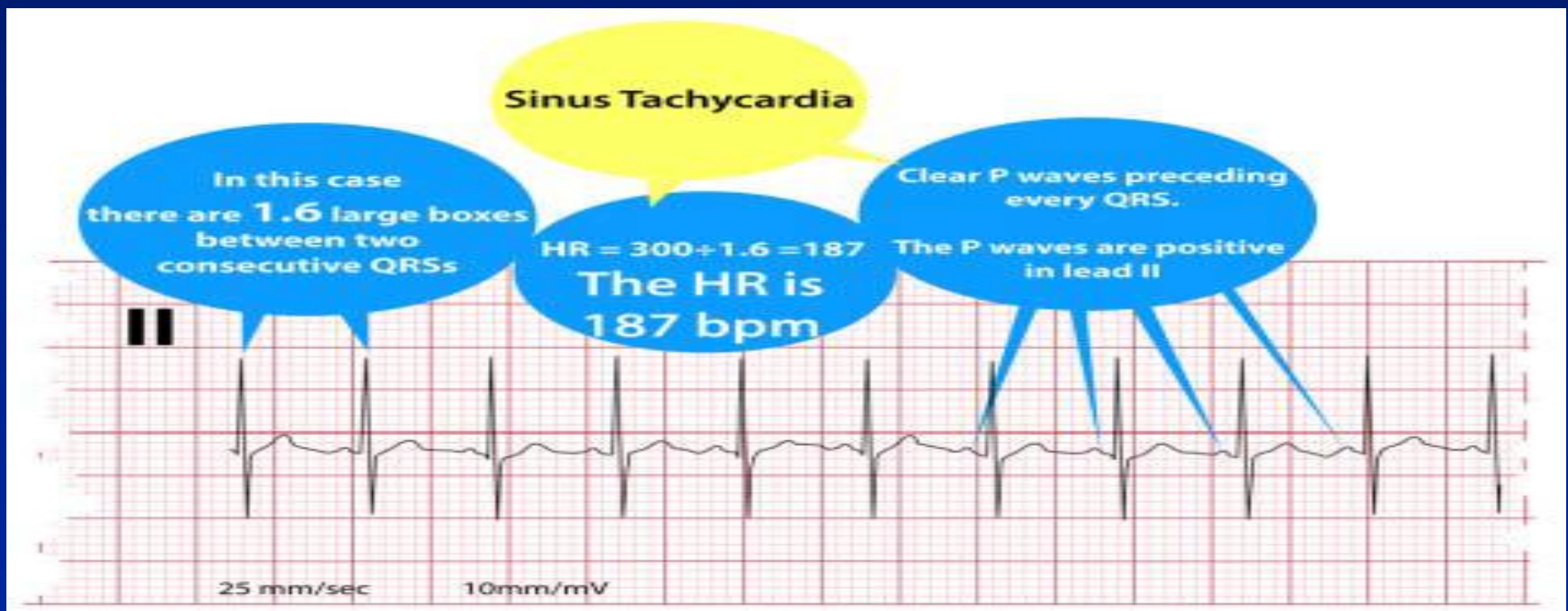
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rhythm and during symptoms should be obtained  
in children with suspected or  
proven arrhythmia

# Rhythm

For determination of heart rhythm, it is important to determine the exact origin of cardiac impulses and correlation of each P wave with next QRS complex

Sinus tachycardia" is a fast sinus rhythm that is consistent with anxiety, crying, fever, and occasionally hyperthyroidism

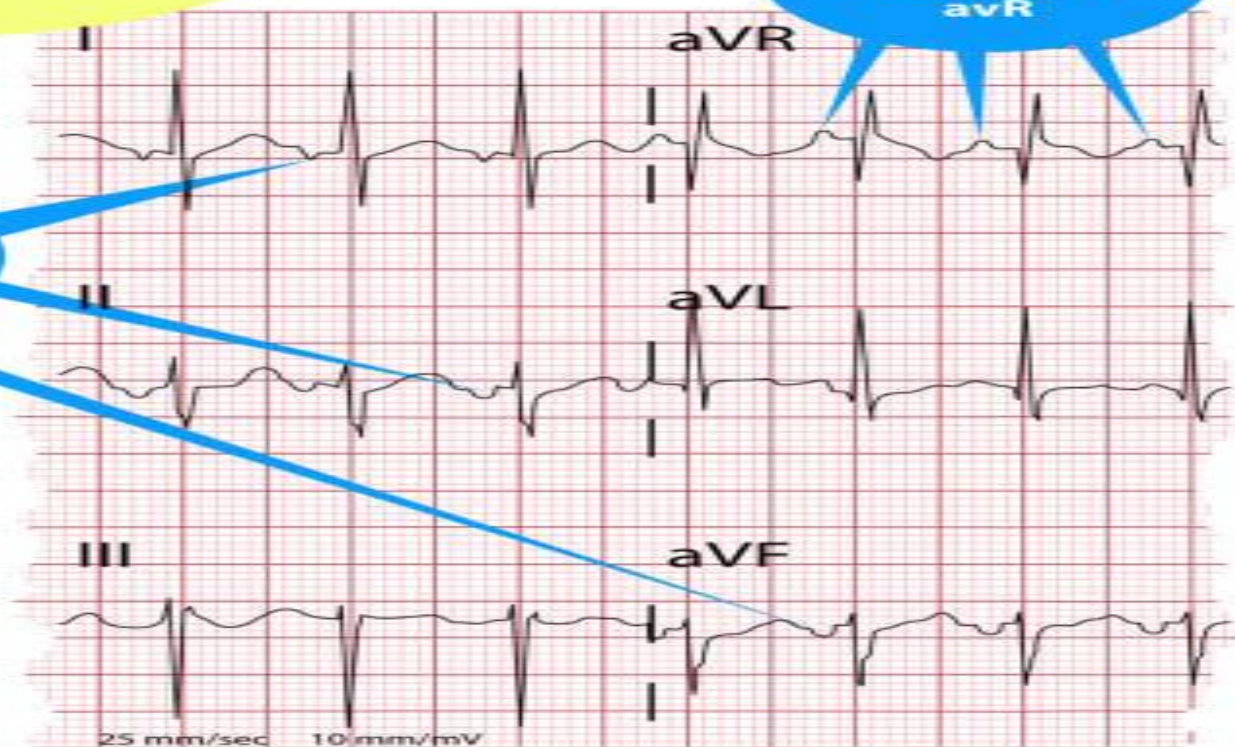


**It's NOT  
Sinus Rhythm!**

This is a low atrial pacemaker

The P waves are  
positive in  
avR

The P waves are  
negative in  
I, II, and avF





# Heart rate

Neonatal heart rate varies between 150 to 230 beats/min especially during crying. The heart rate reaches a peak between one and two months of life and then decreases gradually until six months

# Normal resting heart rates

- ✦ Newborn: 110 - 150 bpm
- ✦ 2 years: 85 - 125 bpm
- ✦ 4 years: 75 - 115 bpm
- ✦ > 6 years: 60 - 100 bpm
- ✦ Adult: 50 - 100 bpm



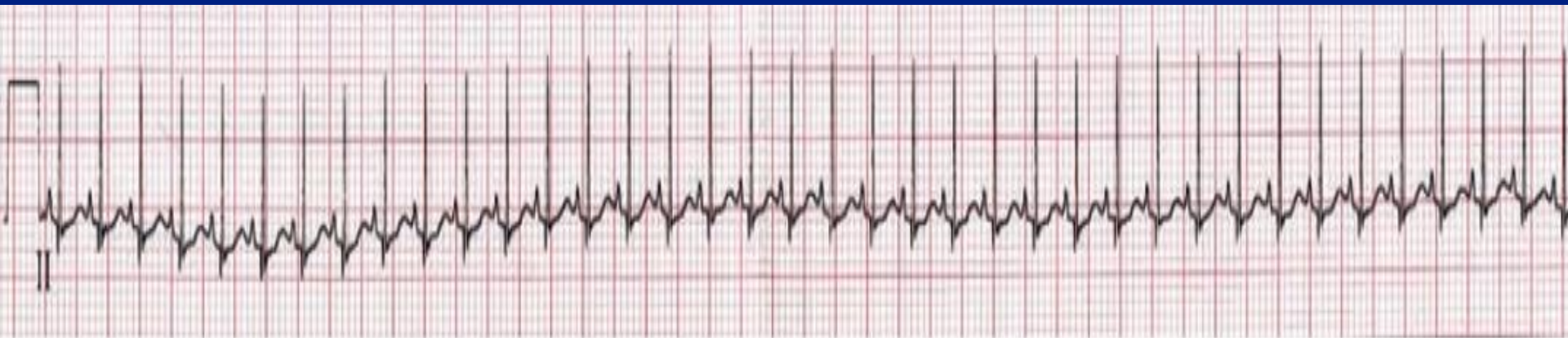
Age-Specific Range of Normal Heart Rates in Children (defined as the 2nd through 98th percentile values)

0—1 d	94—155
1—3 d	92—158
3—7 d	90—166
7—30 d	107—182
1—3 mo	120—179
3—6 mo	106—186
6—12 mo	108—168
1—3 yr	90—152
3—5 yr	73—137
5—8 yr	64—133
8—12 yr	63—130

Age	Resting Heart Rate (bpm)
Birth-1 wk	90–160
1 wk–1 yr	100–170
1–2 y	80–150
3–7 y	70–135
7–10 y	65–130
11–15 y	60–120

The third and most rare mechanism of arrhythmogenesis is

This recording is from a sick neonate (with a normal heart) with septicemia and shows a sinus rhythm at 230/min. This is about the maximum possible rate for sinus tachycardia, even in the newborn, and rates above 200/min are rare



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“Sinus tachycardia” is a fast sinus rhythm that is consistent with anxiety, crying, fever, and occasionally hyperthyroidism

# MECHANISMS OF ARRHYTHMIAS

The mechanisms most often responsible for cardiac arrhythmias are (1) failure of impulse formation, (2) conduction block, (3) reentrant excitation, (4) enhanced automaticity, and (5) triggered activity. Reentry and block are abnormalities of impulse conduction; failure of impulse formation, enhanced automaticity, and triggered arrhythmias are abnormalities of impulse generation.

# PEDIATRIC CLINICAL ARRHYTHMIAS

## Bradyarrhythmias

*Sinus Bradycardia*

*Sinus Arrest*

*Sinus Node Exit Block*

*Atrioventricular Block*

## Tachyarrhythmias

### *Supraventricular Tachycardias*

Sinus Tachycardia

Sinus Node Reentrant Tachycardia

Atrial Flutter

Atrial Fibrillation

Atrial Ectopic Tachycardia

Junctional Ectopic Tachycardia

AV Nodal Reentrant Tachycardia

AV Reciprocating Tachycardia

Permanent Junctional Reciprocating  
Tachycardia

### *Ventricular Tachyarrhythmias*

Premature Ventricular Contractions

Ventricular Tachycardia

Torsade de Pointes

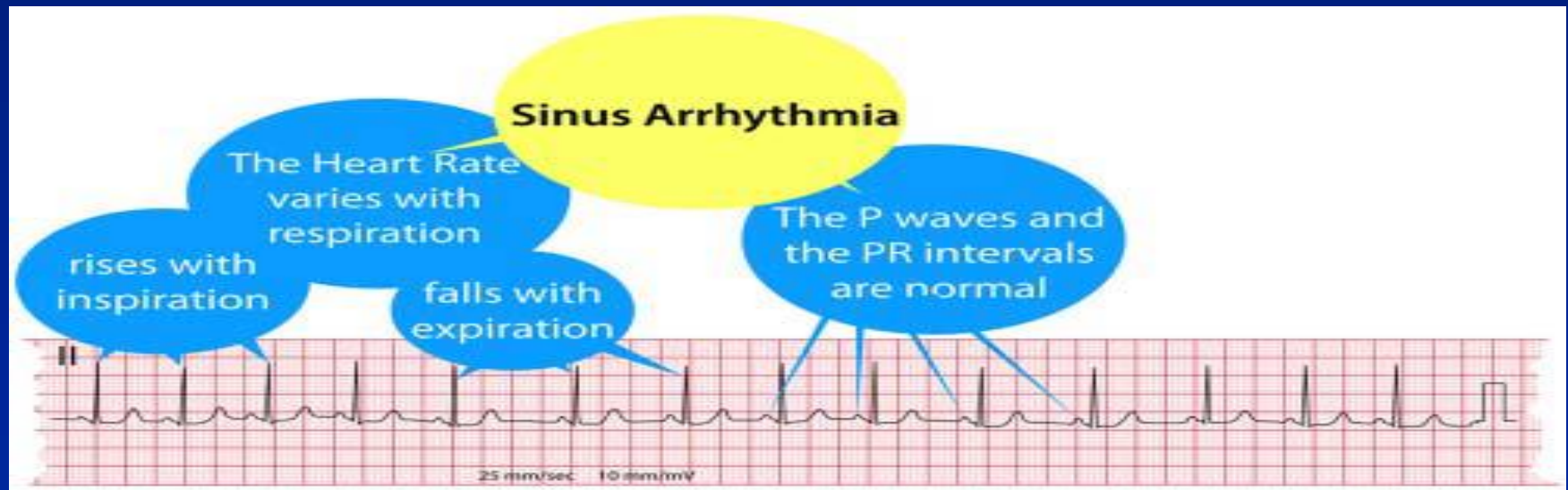
Ventricular Fibrillation



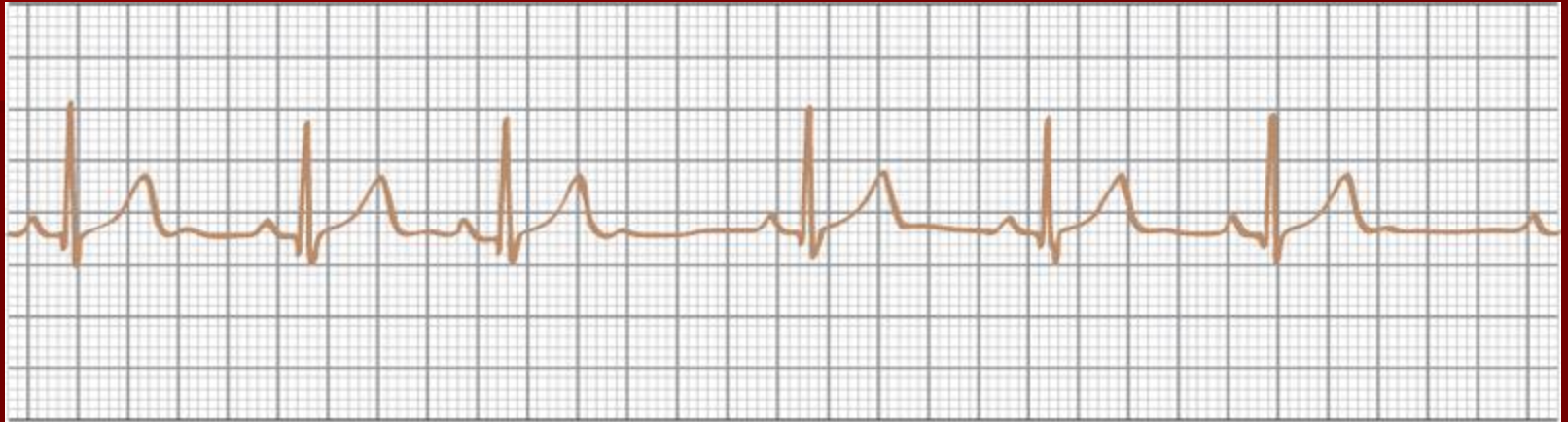
# Pediatric dysrhythmias

Treatment not required	Treatment <u>is</u> required
Sinus arrhythmia	Supraventricular tachycardia
Wandering atrial pacemaker	
Isolated premature atrial contractions	
Isolated premature ventricular contractions	Ventricular tachycardia
First degree AV block	Third degree AV block with symptoms

Sinus arrhythmia” is a normal variation in sinus rhythm that occurs with respiration. The heart rate rises and falls with inspiration and expiration. The variation is more pronounced in young children and less pronounced in infants and adolescents



# Sinus arrhythmia

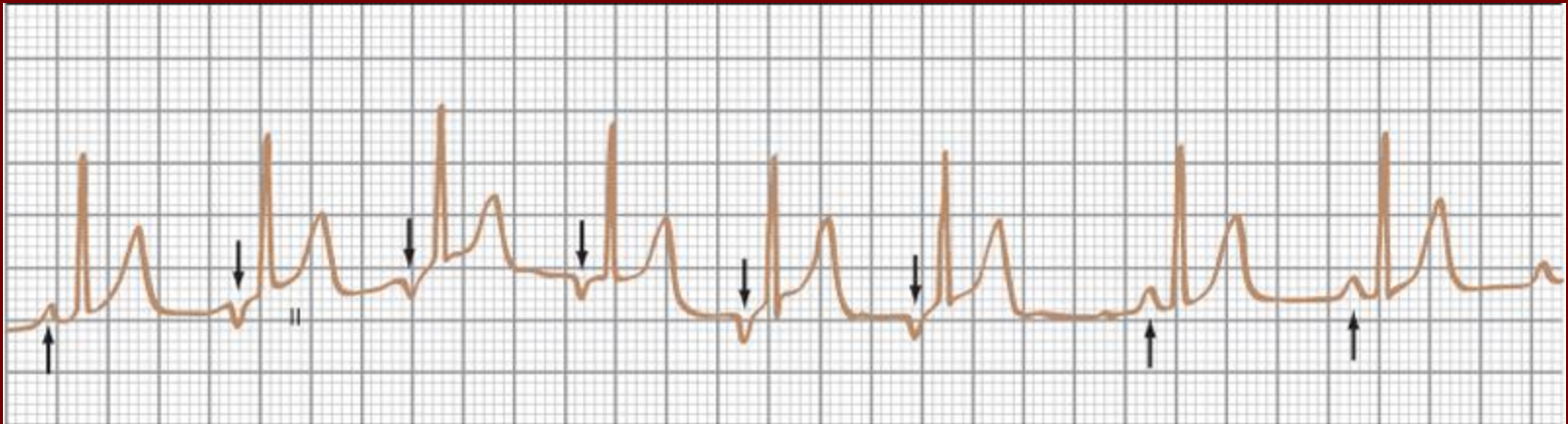


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# Wandering atrial pacemaker


- Atrial pacemaker shifts from sinus node to another atrial site
- Normal variant, irregular rhythm



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# Isolated PAC's

- Premature atrial contractions
- Benign in absence of underlying heart dz
- Common in newborn period
- Early p wave, sometimes with different morphology than a sinus p wave
- Can be either:
  - Not conducted to ventricle, apparent pause
  - Conducted to ventricle with aberrant or widened QRS complex ( careful not to mix up with PVC's)



If there are ectopics, describe them:  
a. Frequent or infrequent narrow  
QRS ectopics usually premature  
atrial contractions  
(PACs).





**PACs**  
Premature Atrial contractions

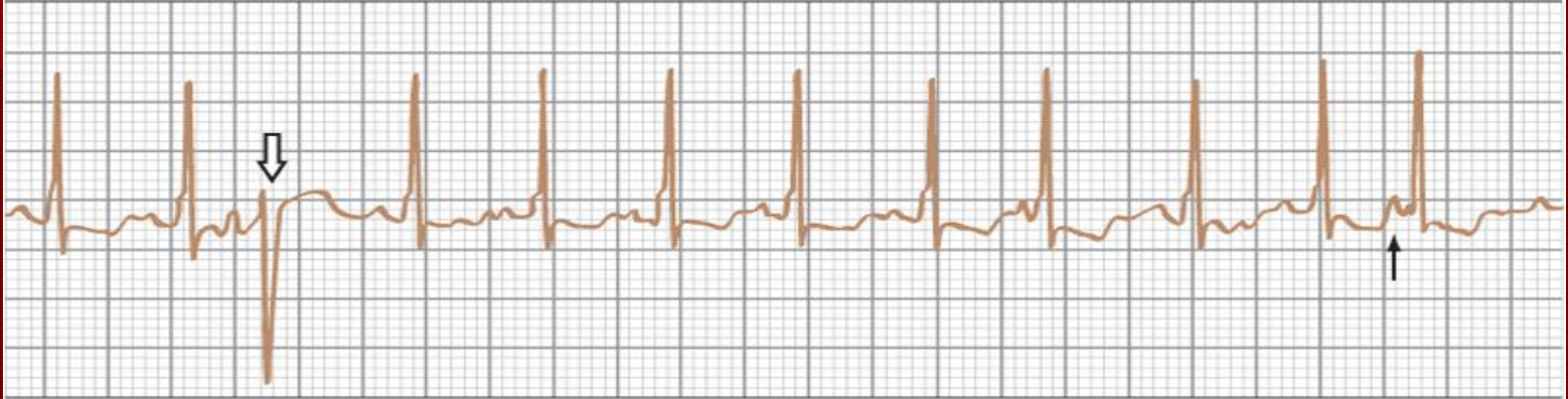
The abnormal P waves appear earlier than expected



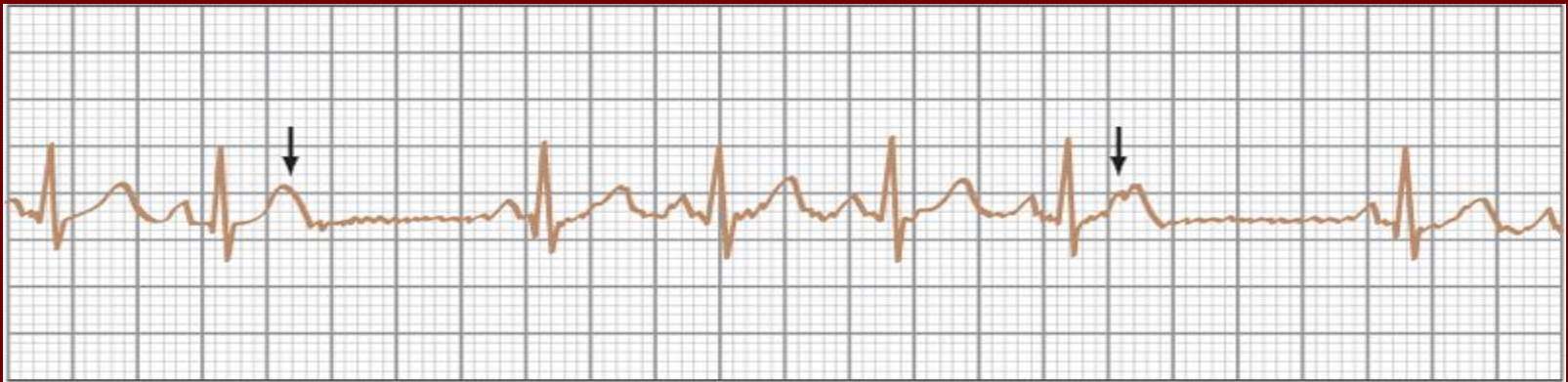
The narrow QRSs that follow the PACs are similar to the normal QRSs



# Isolated PAC's



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# Premature Ventricular Contractions (PVC's)

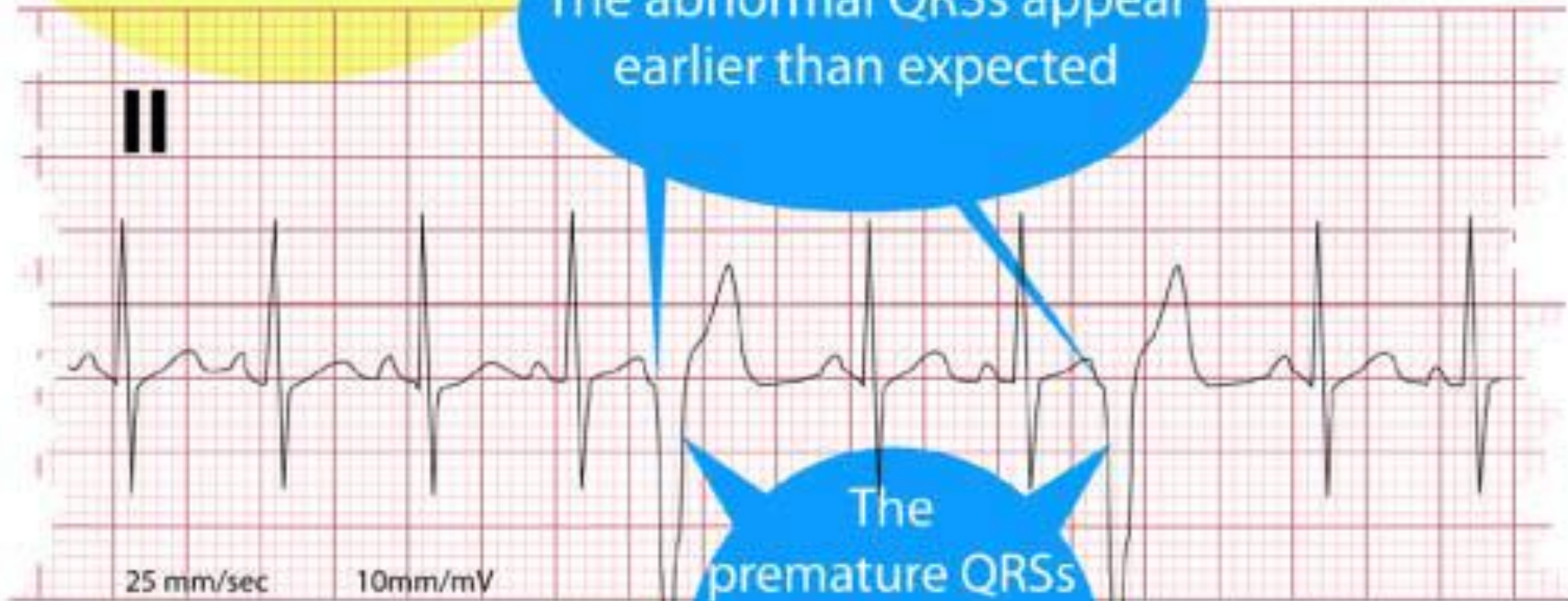
- Not very commonly seen in children
- Incidence of 0.3 to 2.2 %
- Early, wide QRS complexes
- T waves in opposite direction of QRS
- Unifocal PVC's are most encountered type
- Bigeminy, sinus beat followed by PVC, repeating as a pattern, also frequently seen


## PVCs

Premature Ventricular contractions

The abnormal QRSs appear earlier than expected

The premature QRSs are wide and very different from the normal QRSs





Frequent or infrequent wide QRS  
ectopics  
usually premature ventricular  
contractions (PVCs).



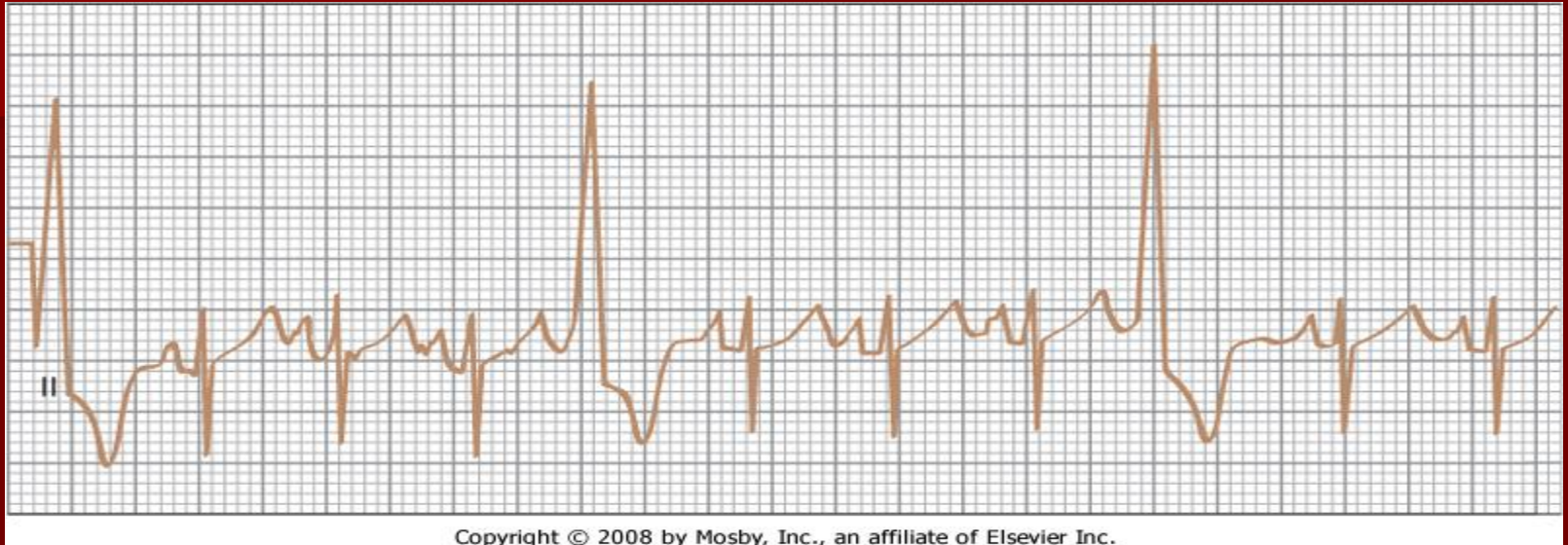
# PVC's



- If unifocal, disappear with exercise, and associated with structurally and functionally normal heart, then considered benign, no therapy needed



# PVC's



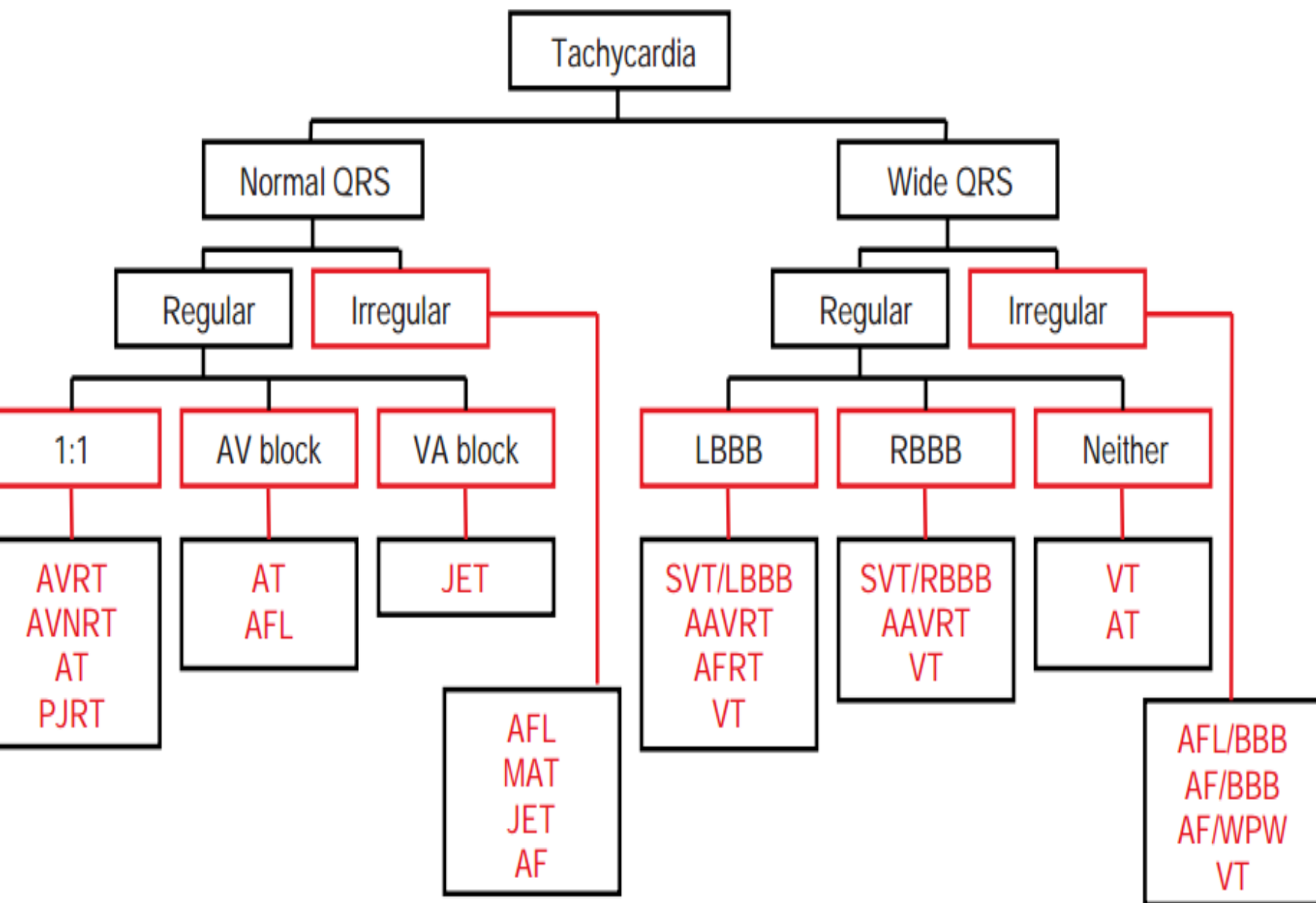
- If unifocal, disappear with exercise, and associated with structurally and functionally normal heart, then considered benign, no therapy needed

# PVC's evaluation

- 12 lead EKG, Echocardiogram
- Perhaps Holter monitoring
- Brief exercise in office to see if ectopy suppressed or more frequent
- Multifocal or paired PVC's more worrisome
- Medications usually not needed
- Advise patients to avoid caffeine and other stimulants

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# tachyarrhythmias



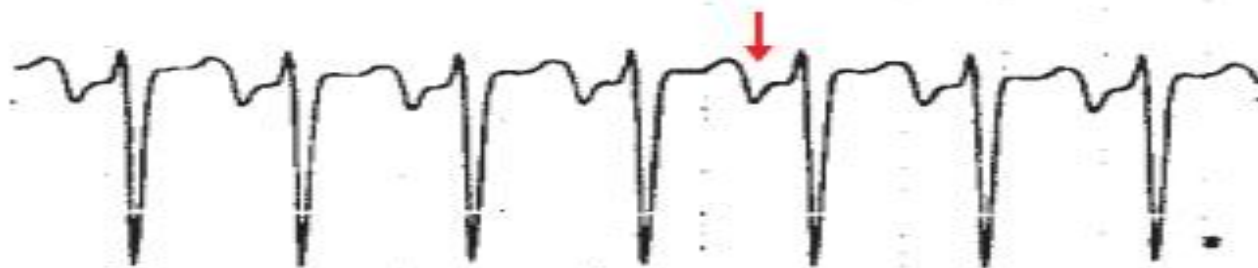
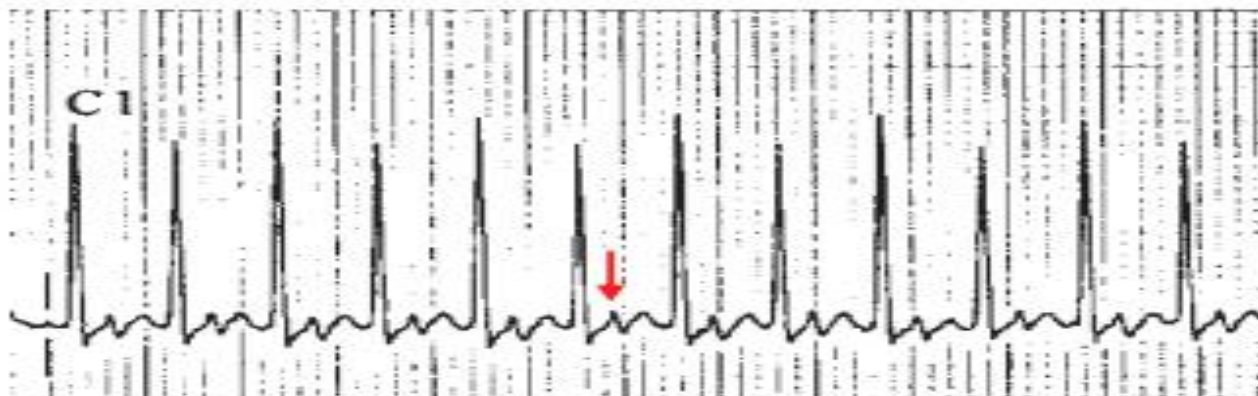


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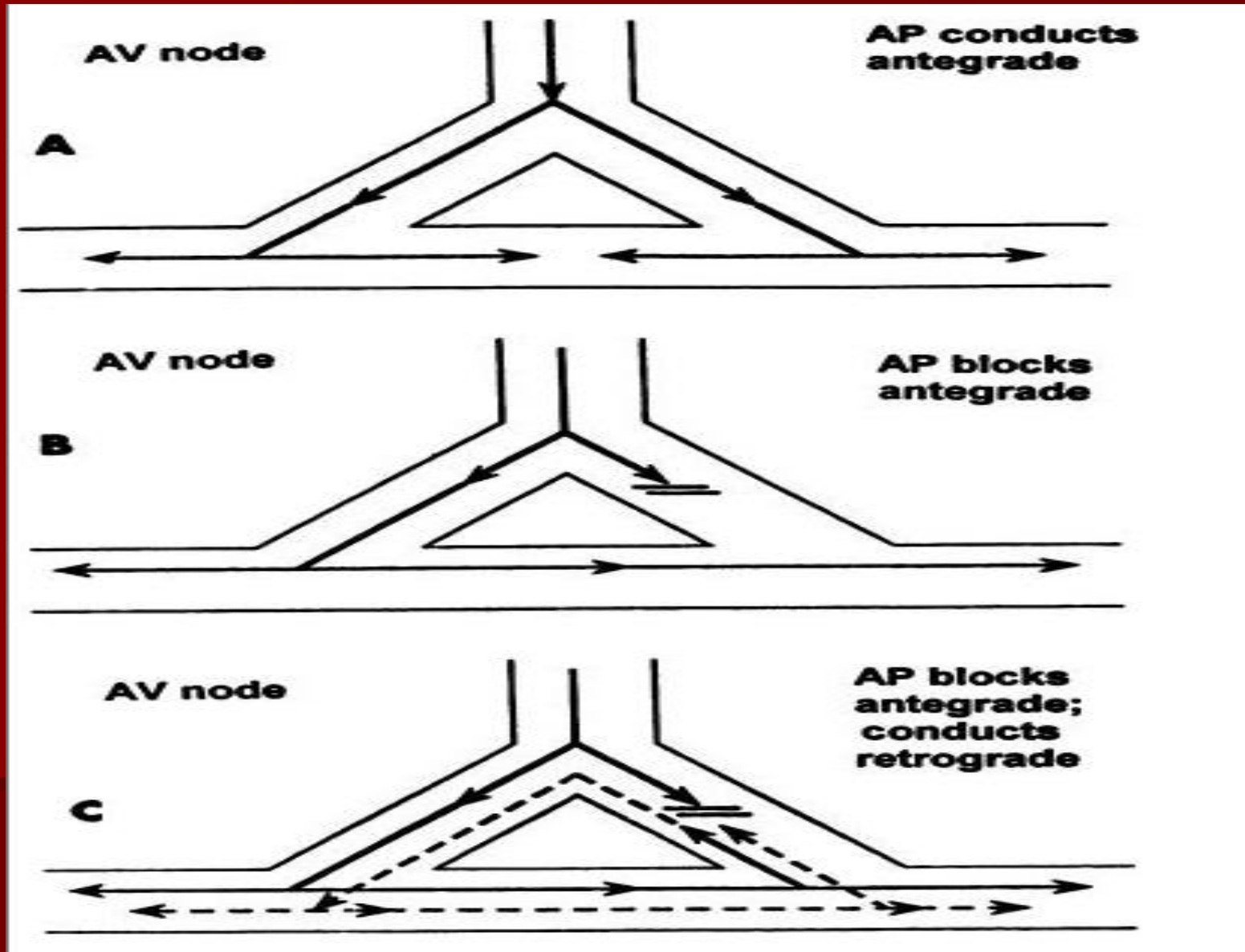
Regular tachycardia with a normal QRS  
and 1:1 AV relationship

Lead

ECG



# Reentrant excitation is the most common cause of tachyarrhythmias







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Regular tachycardia with a normal QRS and AV  
block

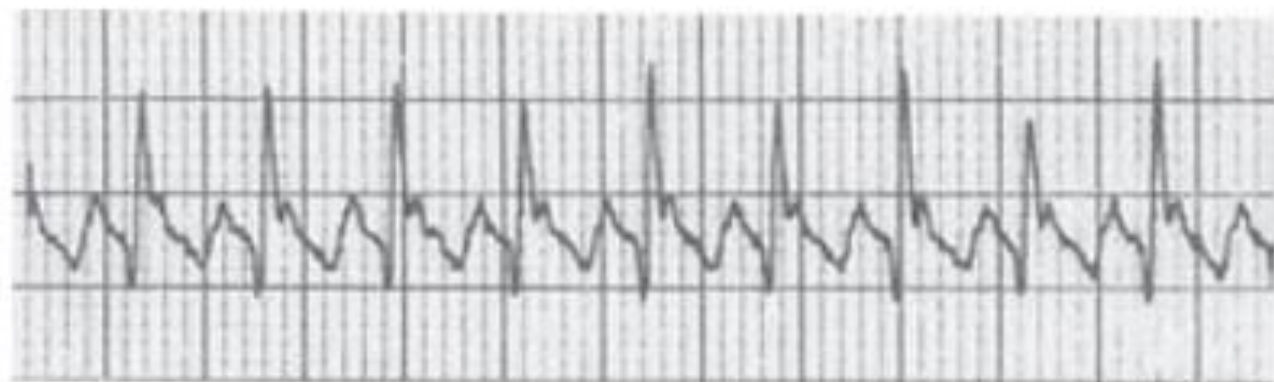
**Lead**

**ECG**

**V1**



**III**



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Irregular tachycardia with a  
normal QRS



**Lead**

**ECG**

III



II



III



II





# Wide QRS complex tachycardia

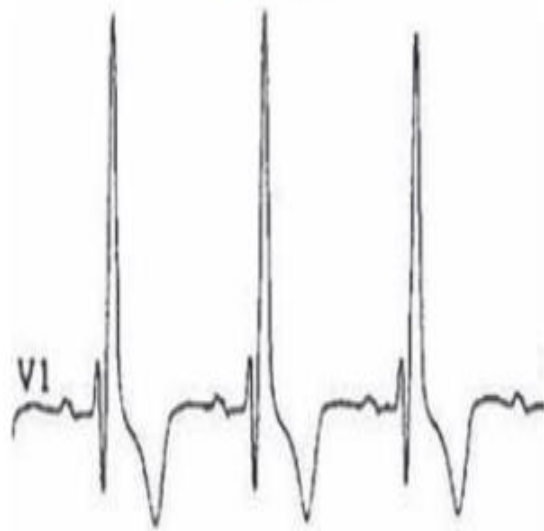
It is best to consider the morphology and regularity of the QRS complexes before looking for P waves

if dissociated P waves are obvious, the diagnosis is clearly ventricular tachycardia

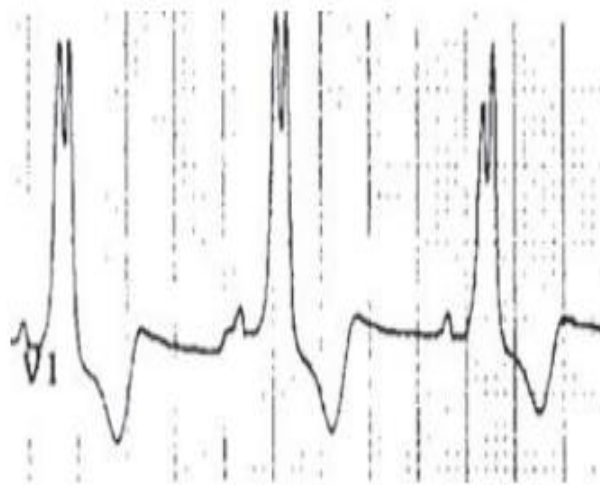
## Wide QRS complex tachycardia

QRS analysis in wide complex tachycardia  
assesses whether the pattern more  
closely resembles right or left bundle branch  
block or neither

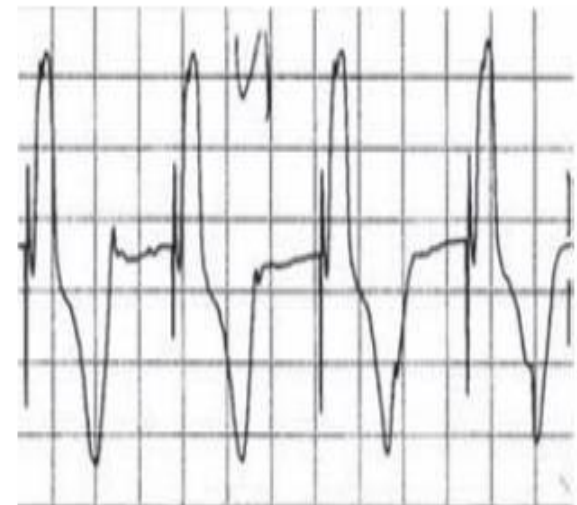
RBBB



Left sided WPW

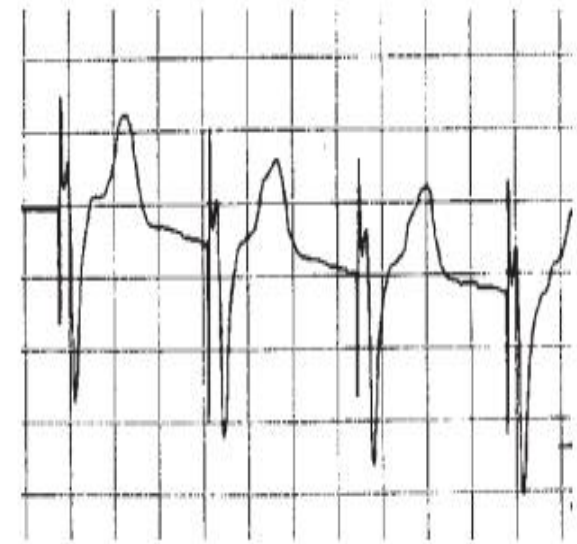
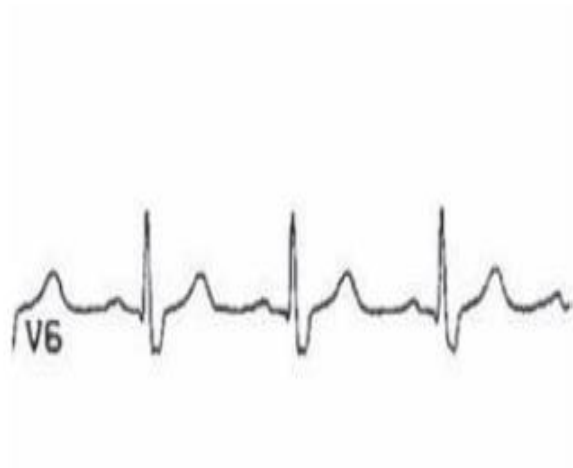


LV pacing



V1

V6



LBBB



Right sided WPW



RV pacing



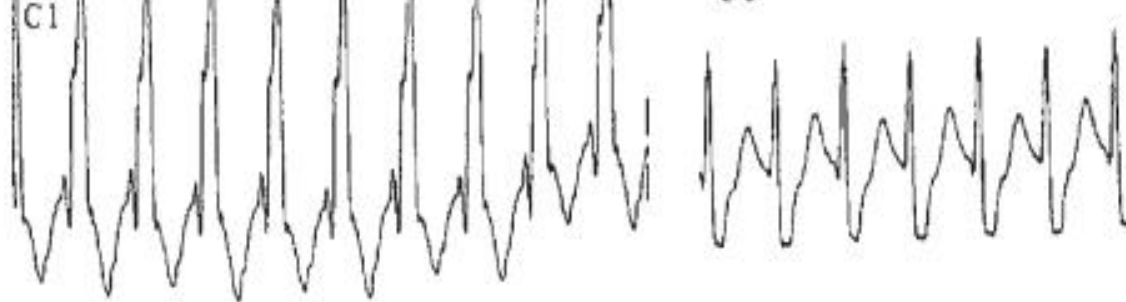
V6



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Regular tachycardia with a wide QRS with right  
bundle  
branch block morphology

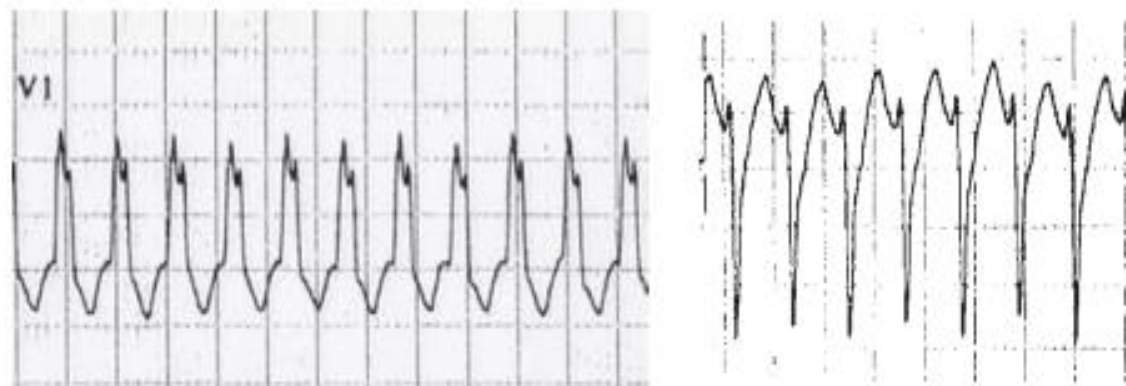
"SVT" with RBBB



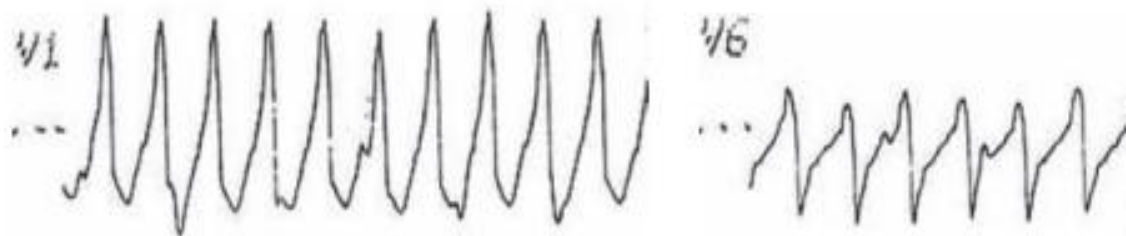
Antidromic AV re-entry tachycardia



Ventricular tachycardia (from LV)



Ventricular tachycardia (from LV)

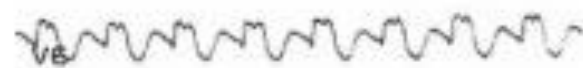
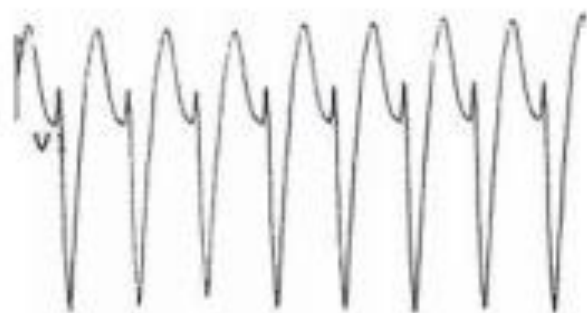


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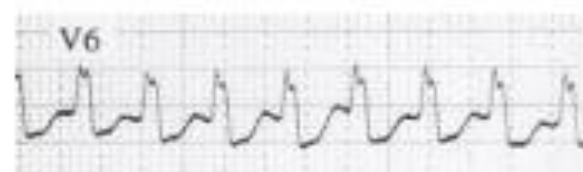
Regular tachycardia with a wide QRS with left  
bundle branch  
block morphology



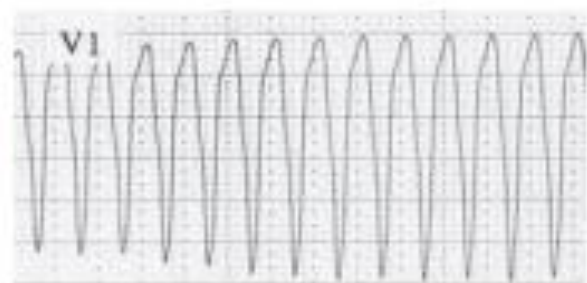
\*SVT\* with LBBB



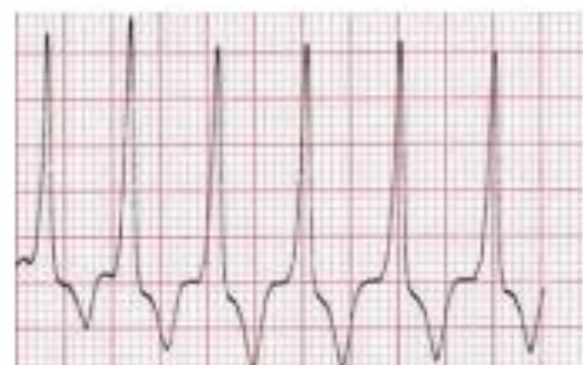
Atriofascicular re-entry tachycardia



Antidromic AV re-entry tachycardia (right sided pathway)



Ventricular tachycardia (from RV)





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Regular tachycardia with a wide QRS and neither  
RBBB  
nor LBBB morphology

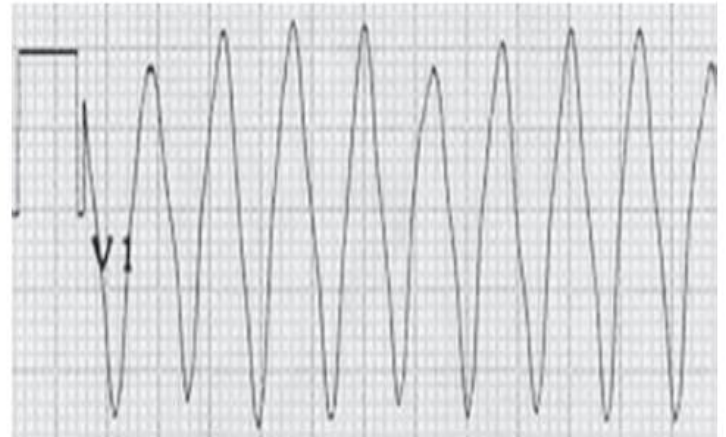
## Diagnosis

## Lead

## ECG

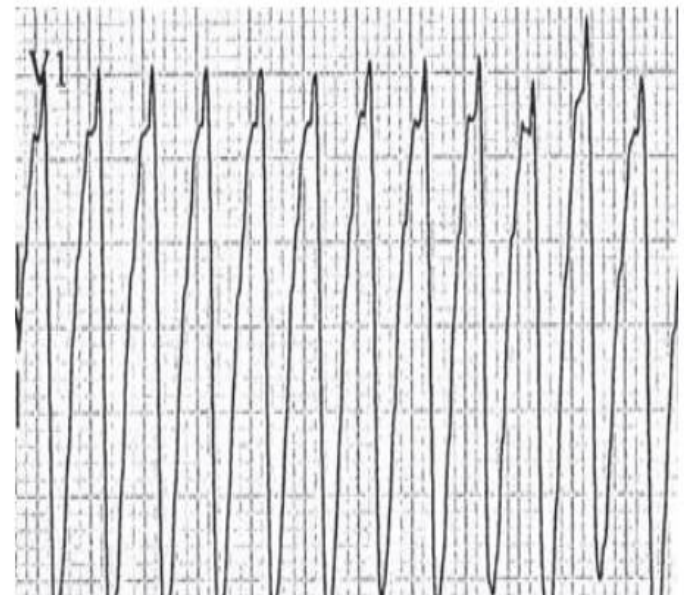
Ventricular tachycardia

V1



Atrial flutter with BBB (especially drug effect)

V1



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Irregular tachycardia with a wide QRS

## Diagnosis

## Lead

## ECG

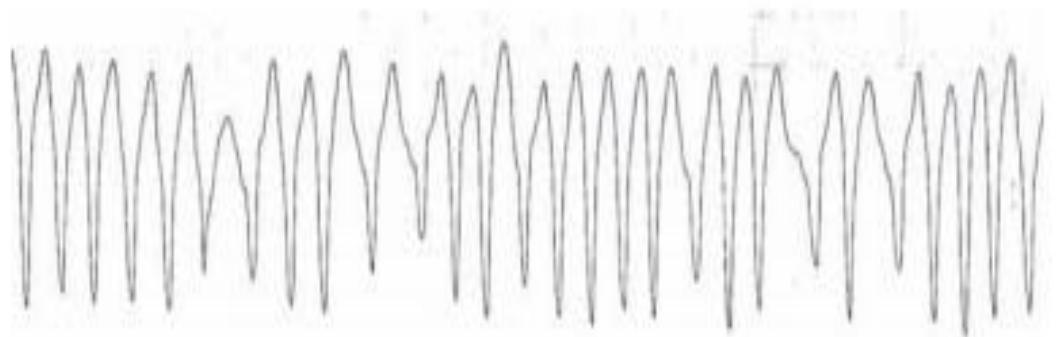
Atrial fibrillation with BBB

II



Atrial fibrillation in WPW syndrome

aVF



Polymorphic ventricular tachycardia (torsades de pointes)

Holter



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## Changing QRS morphology in tachycardia

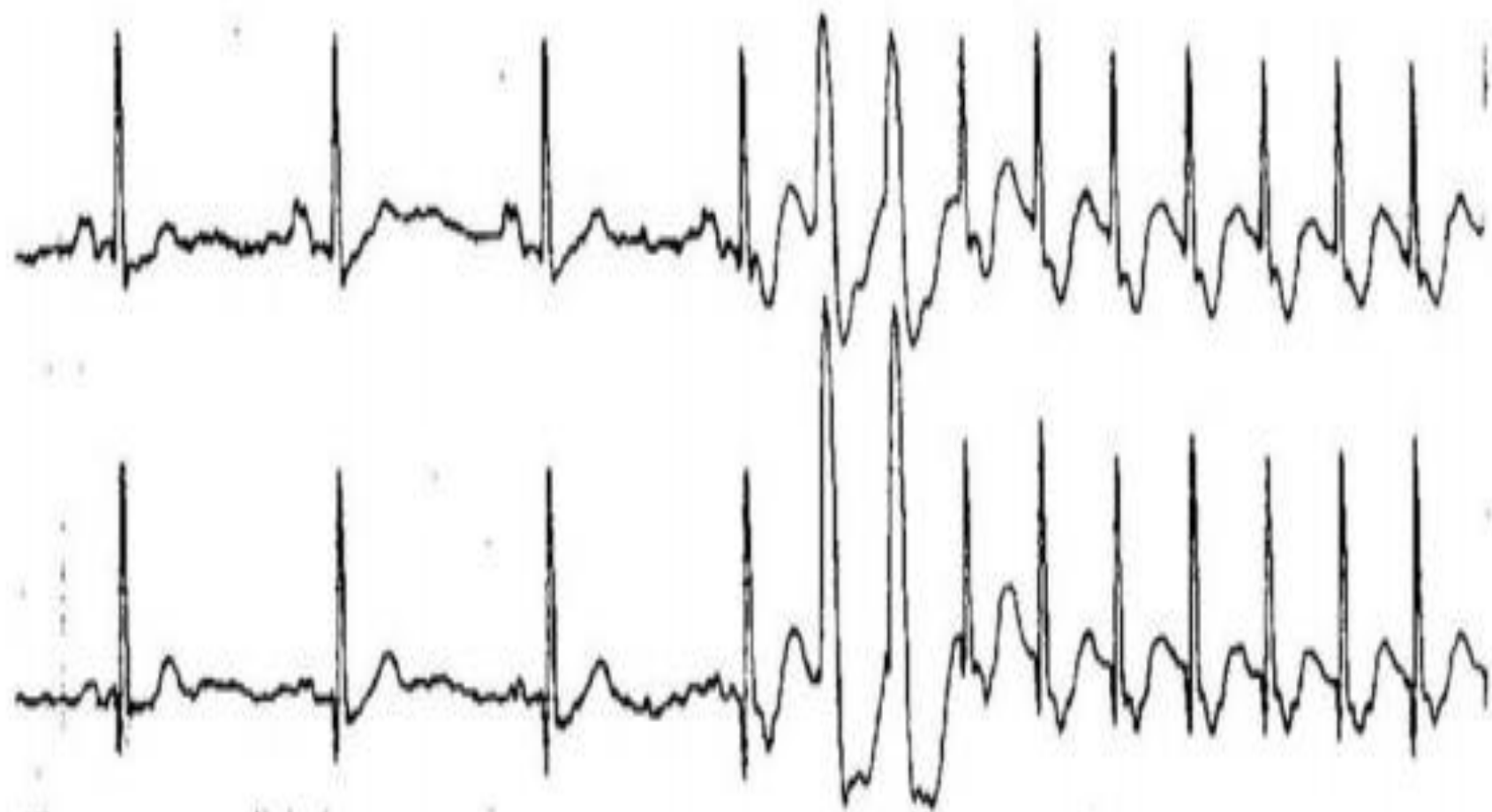


Figure 5.11

## Adenosine in the diagnosis of tachycardias

Intravenous adenosine is the first-line treatment for any sustained regular tachycardia in infancy or childhood, with either a normal or a wide QRS.

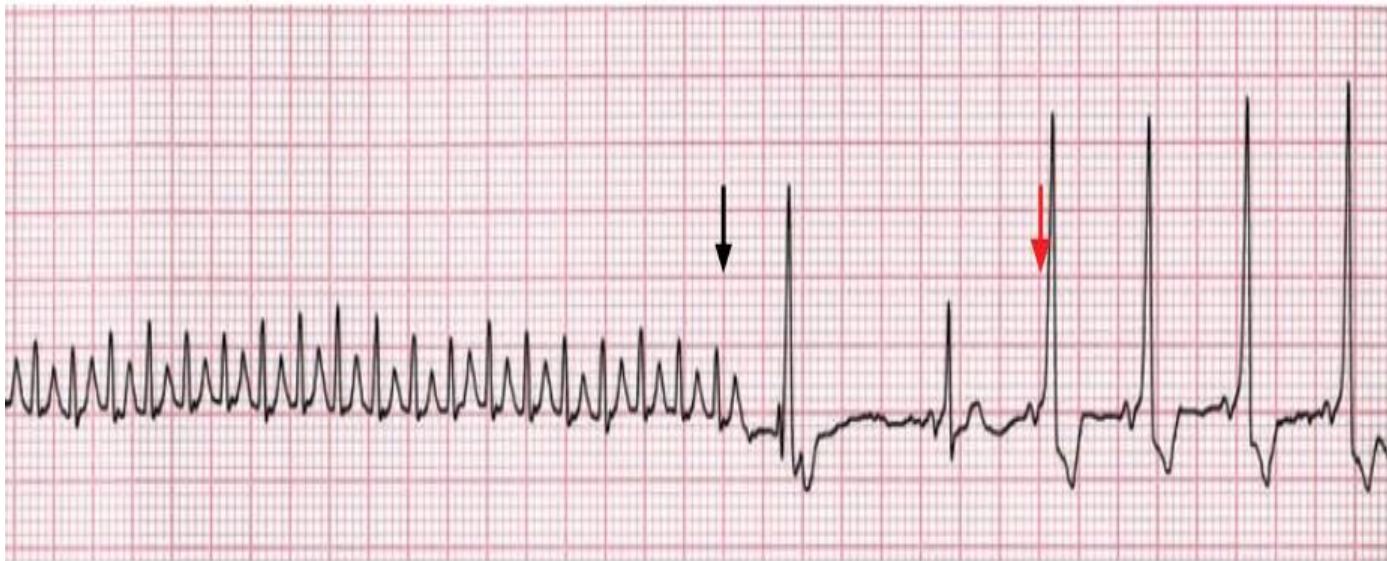
The main aim is termination of tachycardia but any change in the ECG, even if only transient, may give useful diagnostic information

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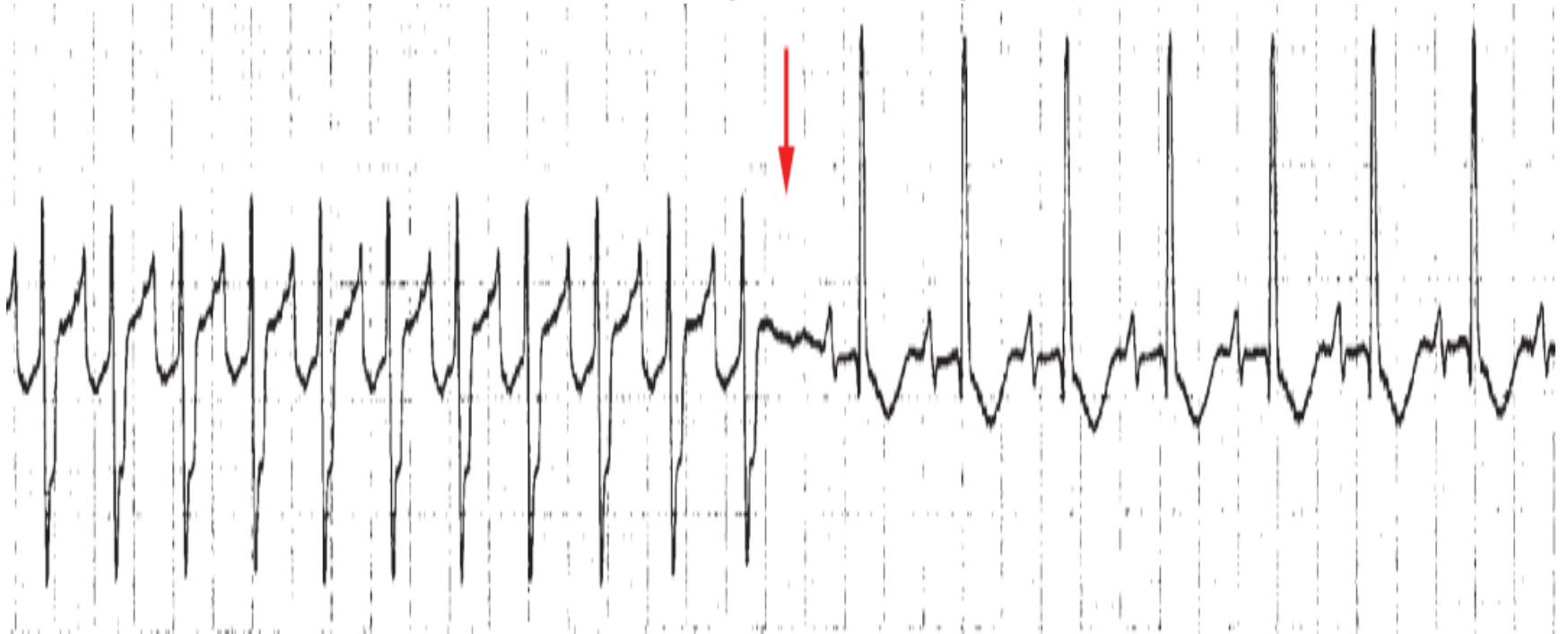
# AV re-entry tachycardia



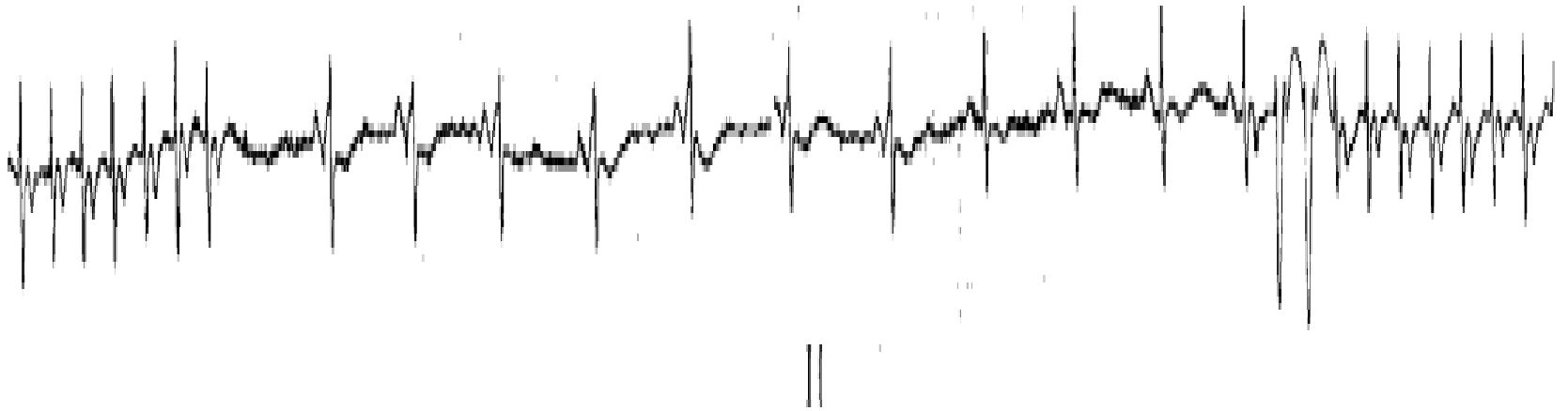
pre-excitation in sinus rhythm (red  
arrow), confirming the presence of  
an accessory  
pathway



retrograde block – shown by a missing  
P wave-  
antidromic  
AV re-entry tachycardia



Tachycardia stops transiently and then  
restarts



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# sinus tachycardia

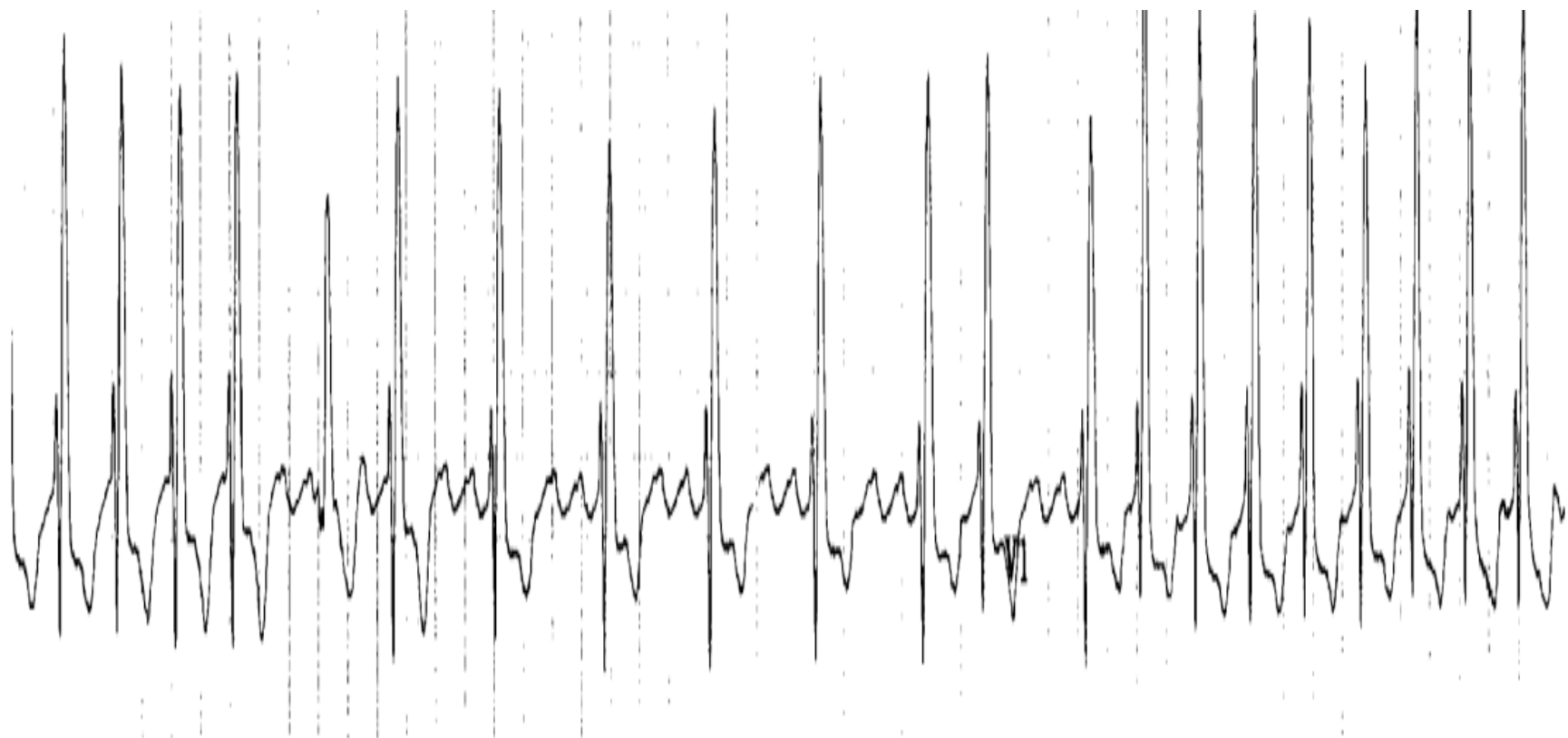
Tachycardia slows transiently and then speeds  
up



# atrial tachycardia or atrial flutter

Tachycardia continues in the presence of AV  
block



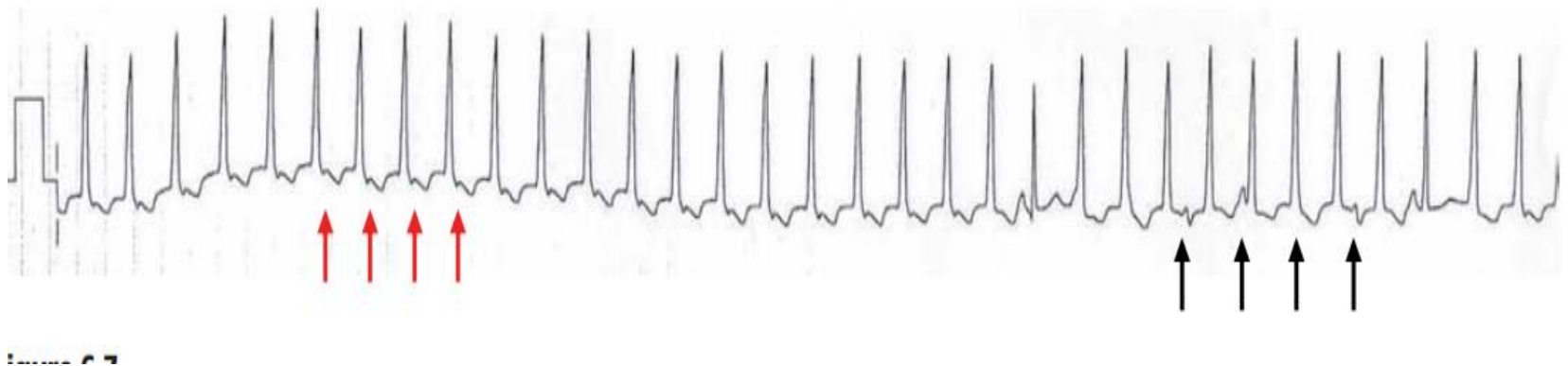




## ventricular tachycardia

Adenosine causes retrograde block, which allows a sinus capture beat (a sinus P wave produces a conducted sinus beat with a normal QRS) followed by obviously dissociated P waves (black arrows).

# Tachycardia continues in the presence of ventriculoatrial block



# CLINICAL ENTITIES FREQUENTLY ASSOCIATED WITH ARRHYTHMIAS & Sudden Cardiac Death

Myocarditis-Cardiomyopathies  
Cardiac channelopathy & Long QT Syndrome  
Arrhythmias in congenital heart defects  
Electrolyte Imbalance  
Cardiac Tumors

## Cardiomyopathy

Hypertrophic cardiomyopathy	?1:10000	1
Arrhythmogenic right ventricular cardiomyopathy	Rare	?0.8

## Cardiovascular malformation

Anomalous origin of a coronary artery	?1:2000	0.5
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## Primary arrhythmia

Congenital long QT syndrome	?1:5000	?
Catecholaminergic polymorphic ventricular tachycardia	Rare	Rare
Wolff–Parkinson–White syndrome	1:700	Rare
Brugada syndrome	Rare	Rare

## Other

Myocarditis	–	0.5
Commotio cordis	–	Rare

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Myocarditis usually results in flattened or inverted  
T waves  
and low-voltage QRS patterns. The QT interval  
may be prolonged. AV block and intraventricular  
conduction delay also  
can occur

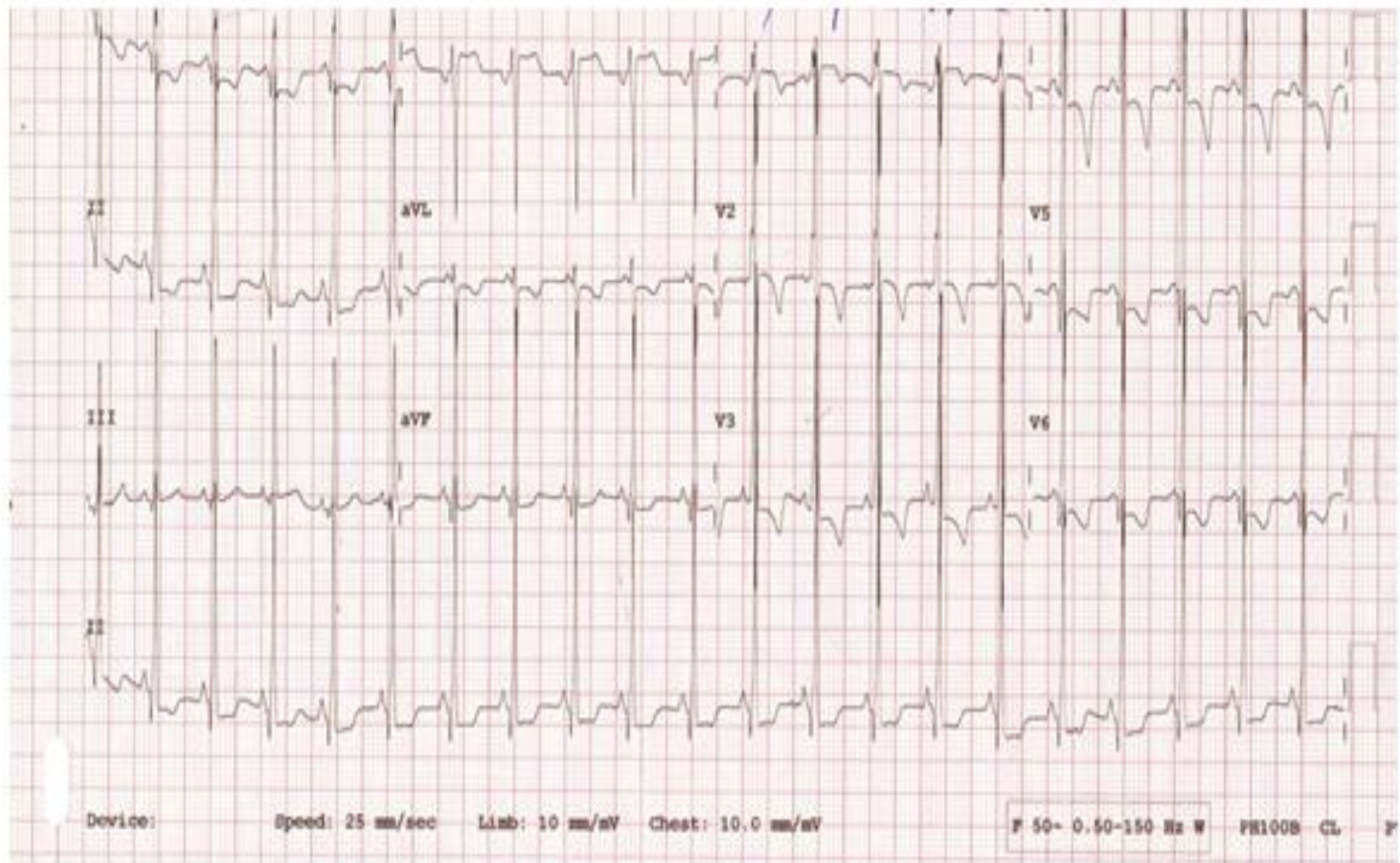
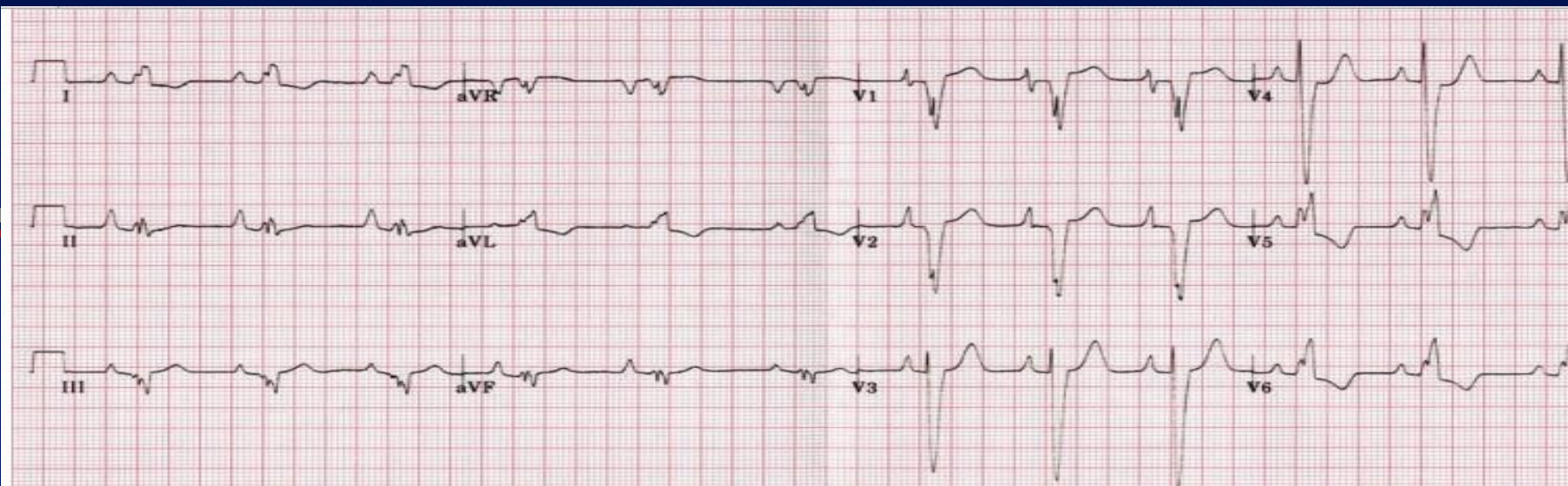
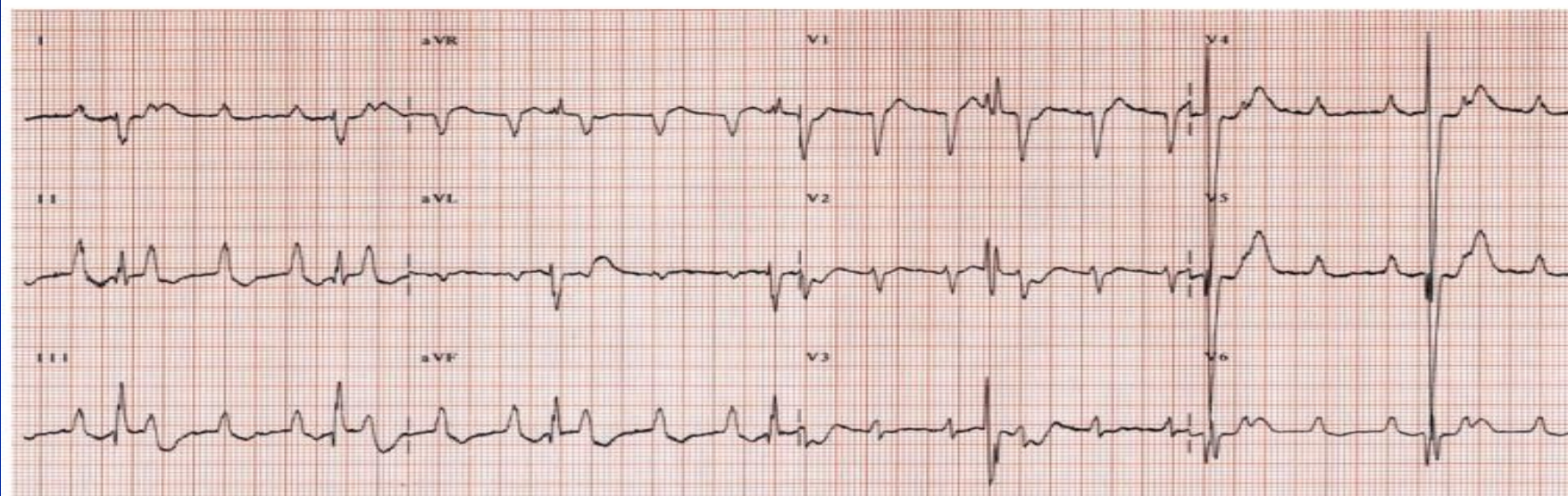


Figure the ST -T change and left ventricular hypertrophy in infants with Pompe disease.





**Figure 34.1**



**Figure 34.2**



## Long QT syndrome

Congenital long QT syndrome (LQTS) was first described as an association of syncope, sudden death, QT prolongation, and deafness with autosomal recessive inheritance by Jervell and Lange-Nielsen in 1957. A more common form with autosomal

dominant inheritance and normal hearing was described independently by Romano

and Ward in 1966. 1

$$QT_c = QT \div \sqrt{RR}$$

A QT<sub>c</sub> measurement of 440 ms (0.44 s) is generally regarded as normal and values over 460–470 ms (0.46–0.47 s) are abnormal. A measurement of 440–460/470 is borderline and cannot, by itself, confirm or exclude an abnormality. The machine-measured QT<sub>c</sub> interval is generally reliable but should always be checked by manual measurement when it gives a borderline result or when the diagnosis of LQTS is being considered serious.

# Risk stratification

Various predictors of increased risk in LQTS have been described but few of them have a major impact on management. The main predictors of increased risk are a QTc duration of 500 ms and a history of syncope. A family history of premature sudden cardiac death seems not to be independent risk factor

# Acquired long QT syndrome

Antiarrhythmics, e.g. quinidine, sotalolol, disopyramide

Antihistamines, e.g. terfenidine, astemizole

Macrolide antibiotics, e.g. erythromycin, clarithromycin

Fluoroquinolones, e.g. sparfloxacin, ciprofloxacin

Antimalarials, e.g. chloroquine, halofantine

Imidazole antifungals, e.g. ketoconazole

Tricyclic antidepressants, e.g. imipramine

Antianginals, e.g. bepridil

Prokinetics, e.g. cisapride

Antiemetics, e.g. domperidone, droperidol

Antipsychotics, e.g. haloperidol, thioridazine, pimozide

Anti-infective agents, e.g. pentamidine

Anti-cancer drugs, e.g. arsenic trioxide, tamoxifen

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The precise underlying cause of acquired LQTS  
is not as well understood as for  
congenital LQTS

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A small number of acquired LQTS patients can  
be shown to have  
mutations associated with congenital LQTS and  
may just have a subclinical variant.  
Female sex is also a risk factor.

LQT1

LQT2

LQT3

II



V5

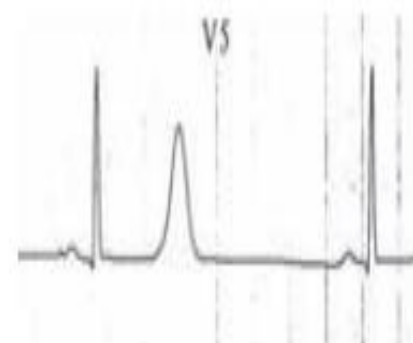
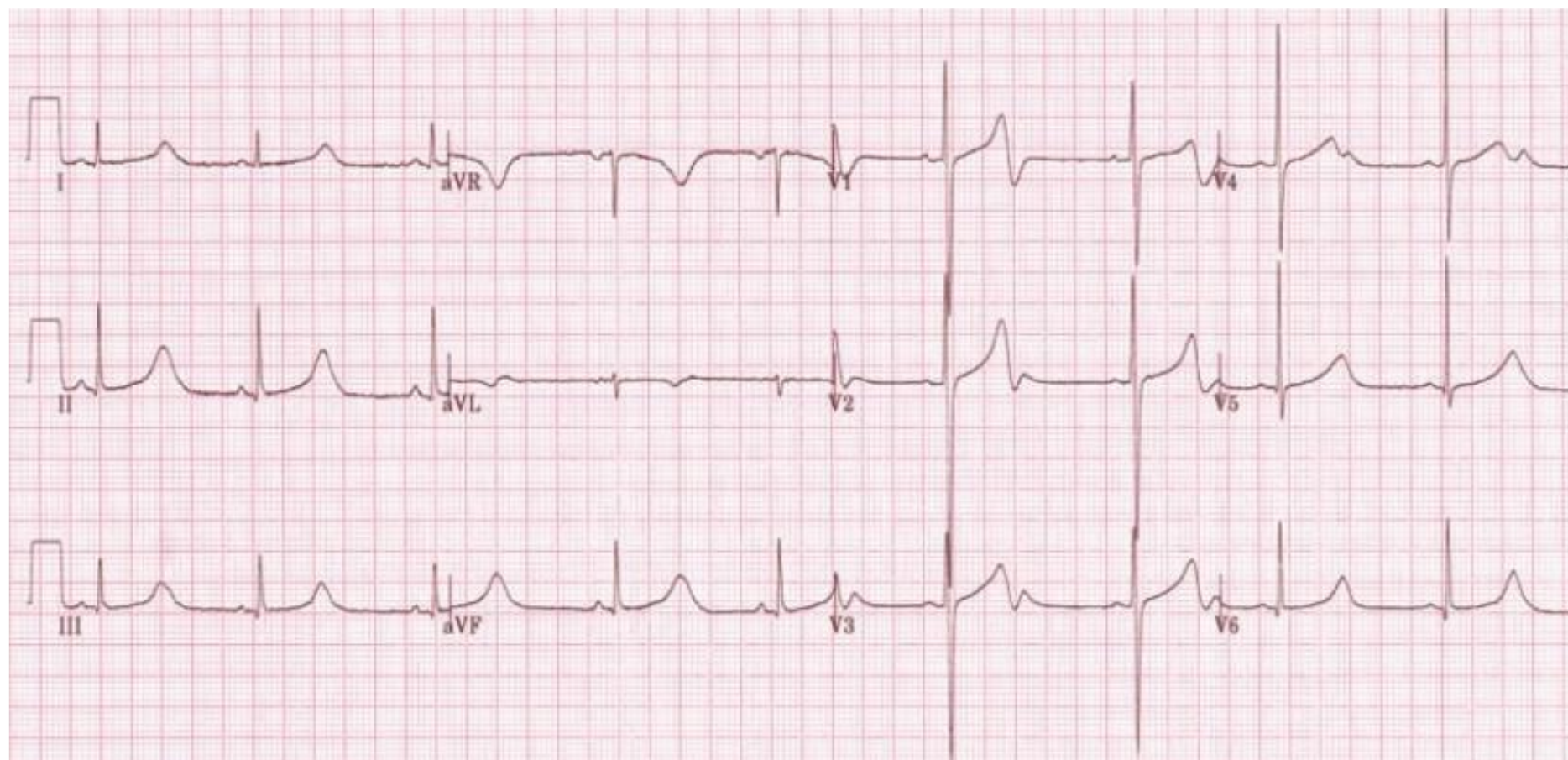


Figure 25.2

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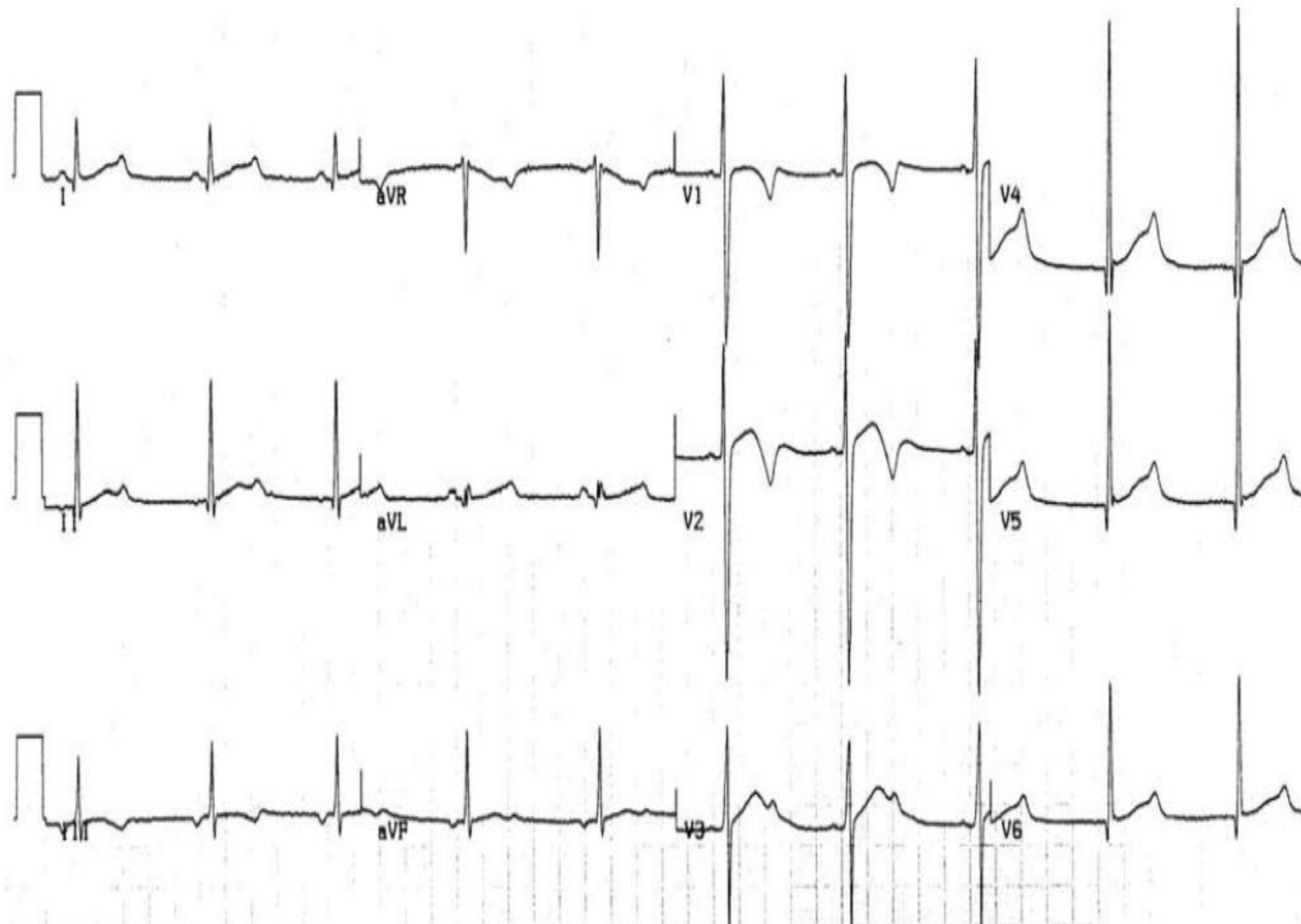
a 12-year-old boy with a typical presentation with syncope on exercise and a proven LQT1 mutation. His heart rate is around 55/min and his QT interval is 600 ms. Symptoms are mostly related to exertion in LQT1 and occur at a relatively young age, with 60% of patients experiencing their first symptoms before the age of 10



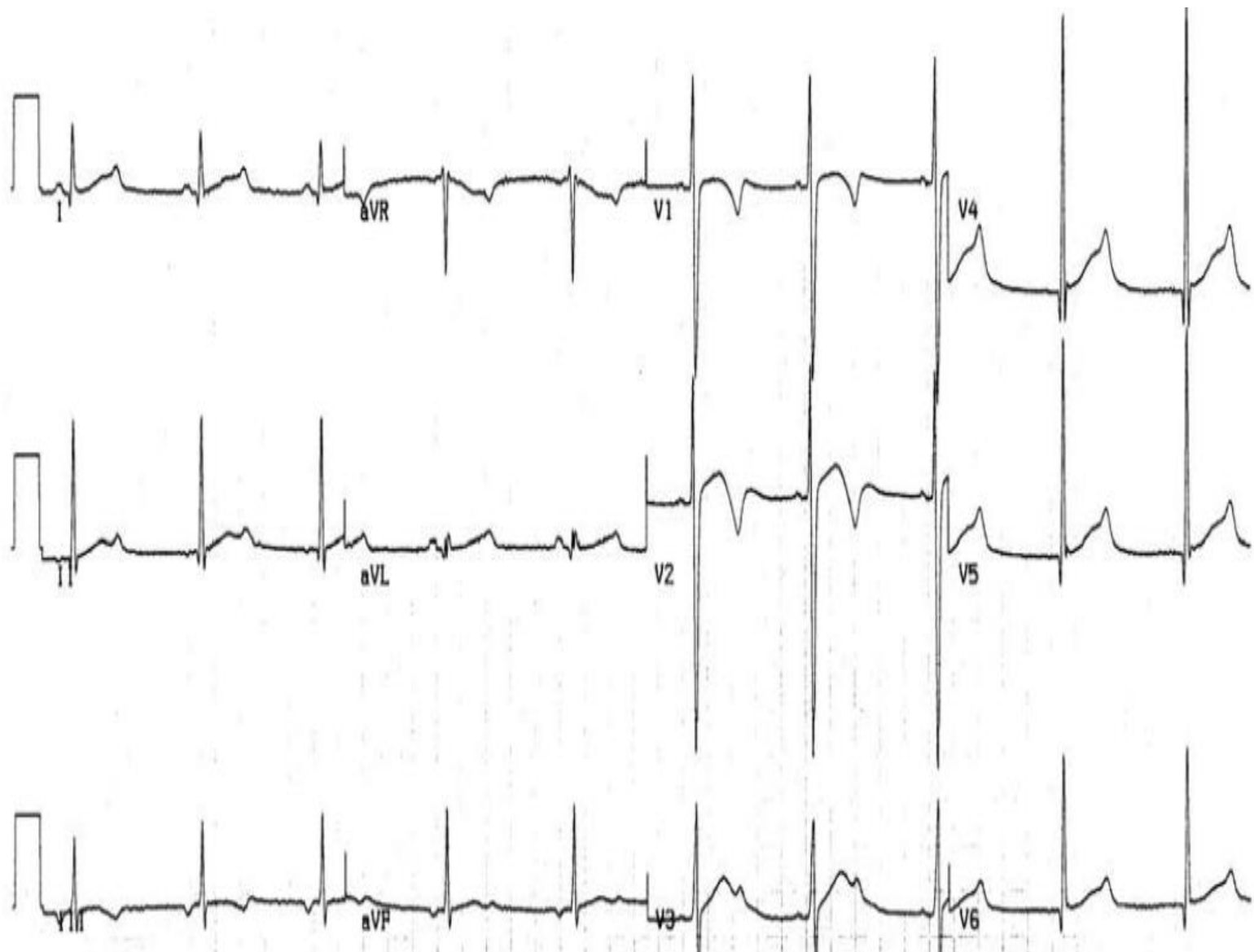


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a 10-year-old boy  
with syncope. Symptoms are less common in  
LQT2 but the risk of death is probably  
higher than LQT1. Syncope in LQT2 more often  
occurs during emotional stress or  
sleep or at rest

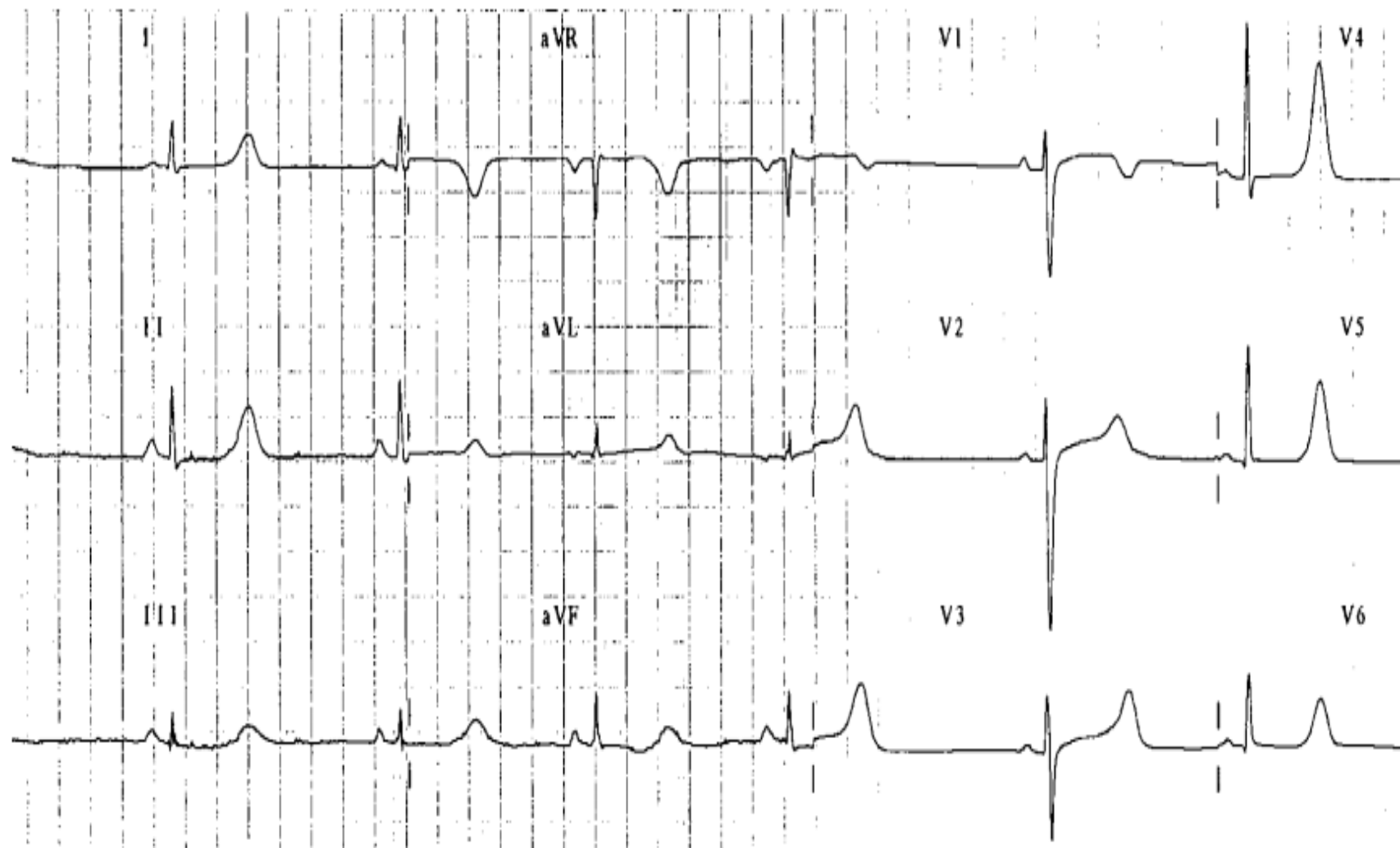


the typical appearance of LQT3 in an 8-year-old boy with mild aortic stenosis who was found by chance to have QT prolongation. The sharply peaked T wave in chest leads follows a long isoelectric ST segment. Symptoms during rest or sleep are also more common than during exercise in LQT3



## a boy with Jervell Lange-Nielsen syndrome

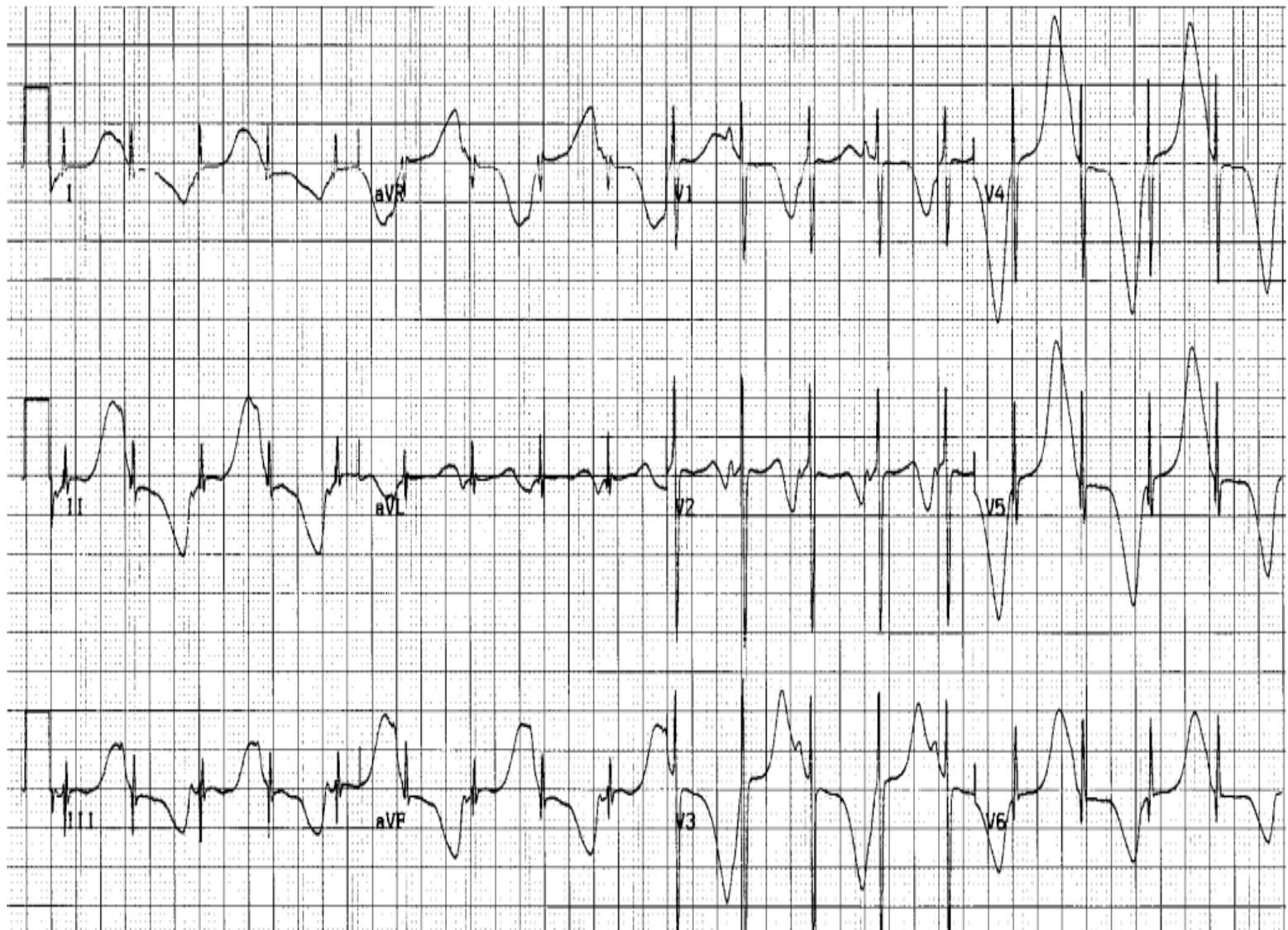
. In this rare condition most known patients are symptomatic, presenting with syncope on exercise or during emotional stress at a young age, usually before school age. The QT interval is usually markedly prolonged, as shown here. In this example the T waves are flat in many leads and the QT interval is impossible to measure in leads II and V5, so others leads have to be used



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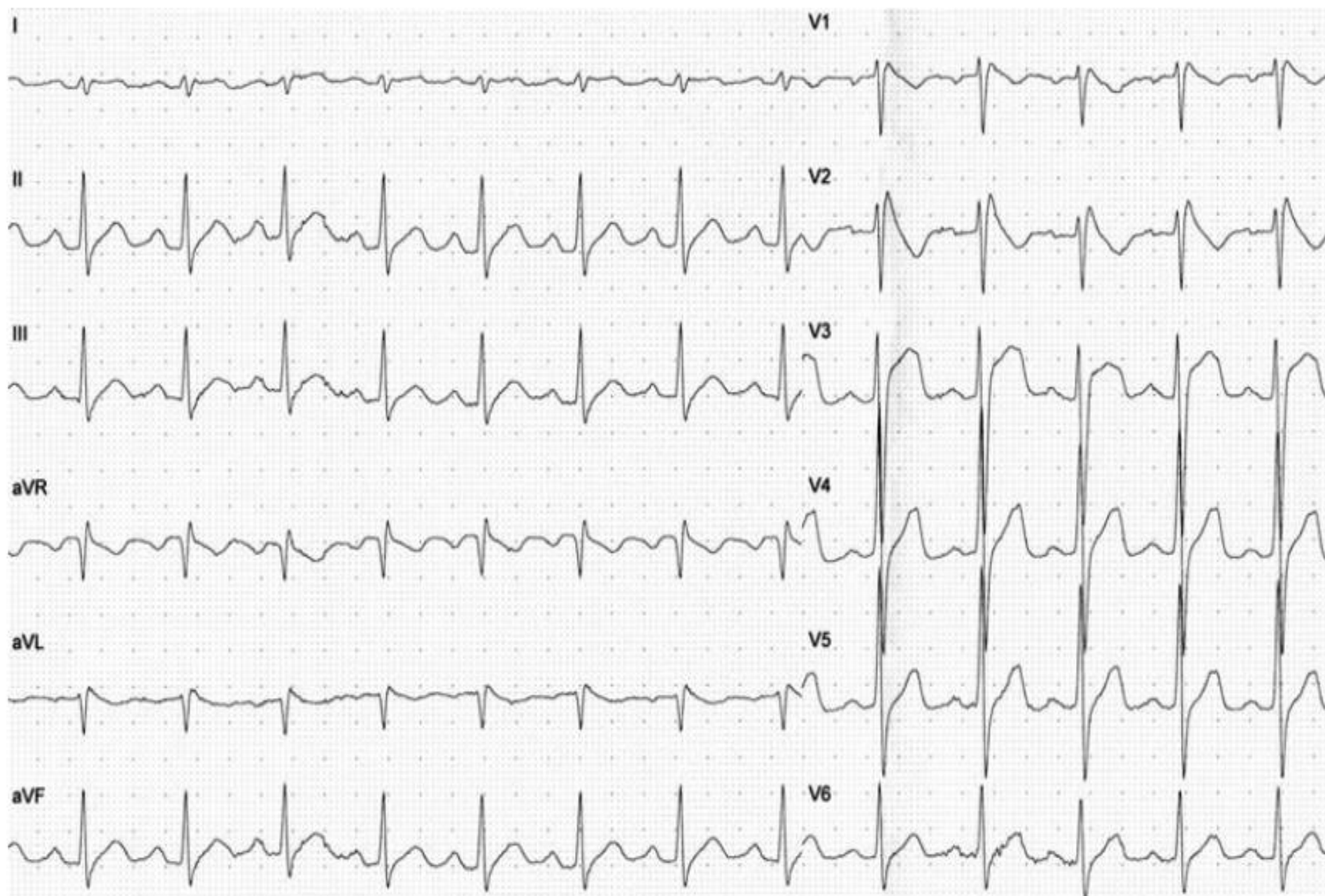
a 4-year-old boy undergoing transcatheter closure of a patent ductus arteriosus under general anesthetic. His QT prolongation was an incidental finding and he had never had symptoms or arrhythmias. So far his genotype has not been identified





Acute management of acquired LQTS involves withdrawal of the offending agent, correction of hypokalemia to a potassium  $\geq 4$  mmol/L and giving intravenous magnesium. Isoprenaline infusion or temporary pacing may also be useful to prevent any triggering bradycardia or pauses. Further management avoids future avoidance of any positive drug. Acquired LQTS is generally considered not to be familial but similar advice may be offered to first-degree family mem

# Brugada syndrome



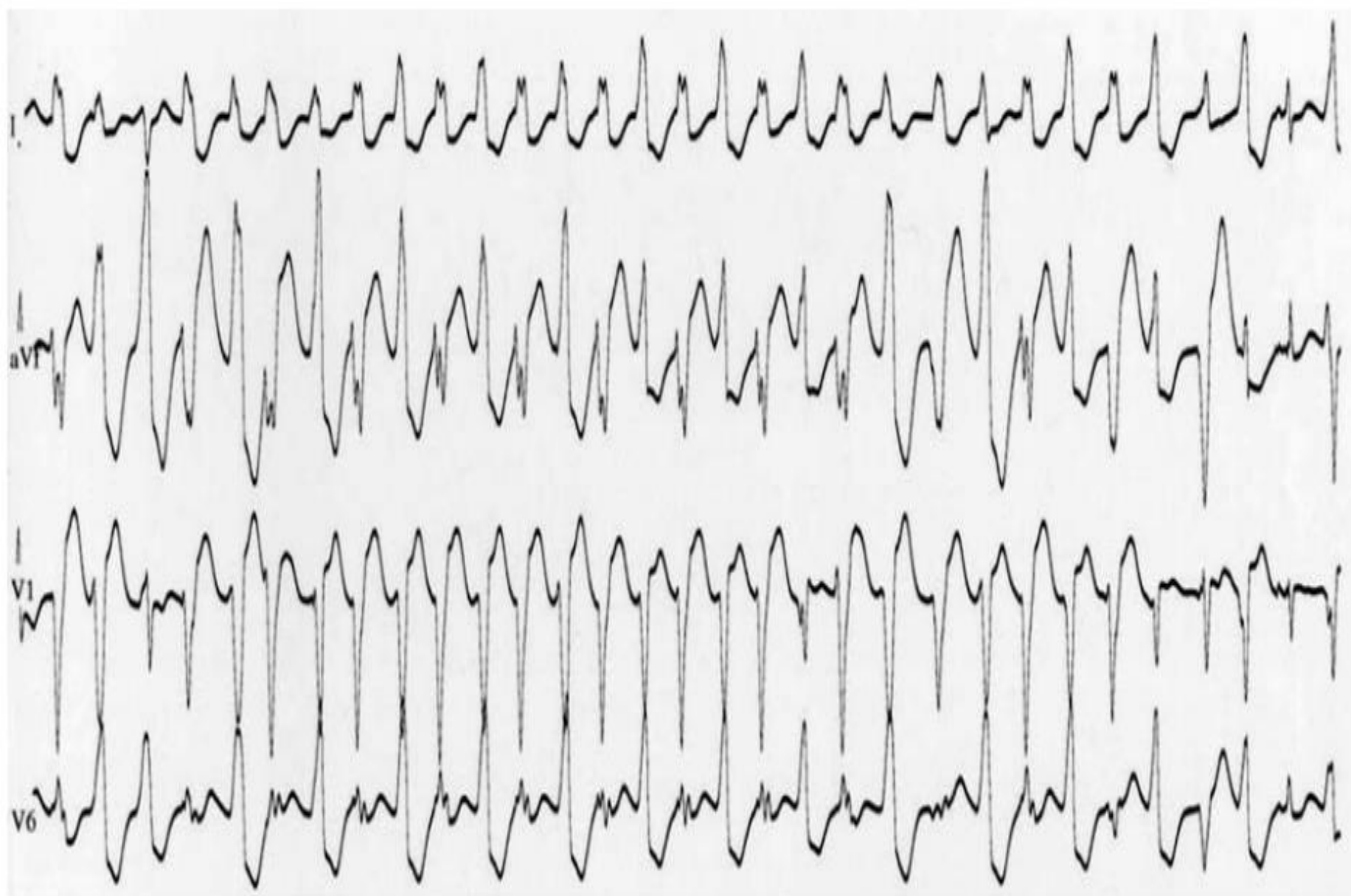
**Figure 27.2**

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an 11-year-old girl whose father died in his sleep at the age of 39 years. The autopsy was normal and the cause of his death was not established

# Catecholaminergic polymorphic ventricular tachycardia

Catecholaminergic polymorphic ventricular tachycardia (CPVT) is one of the rarest but most dangerous ventricular arrhythmias encountered in childhood and is associated with a high risk of syncope and sudden death. It usually has autosomal dominant inheritance and 20–50% of cases show a mutation in the cardiac ryanodine receptor gene (RYR2). RYR2 is the main calcium release channel on the sarcoplasmic reticulum within cardiac myocyte.



**Figure 26.3**

# Antiarrhythmic drug treatment



# Classification of Antiarrhythmic Agents

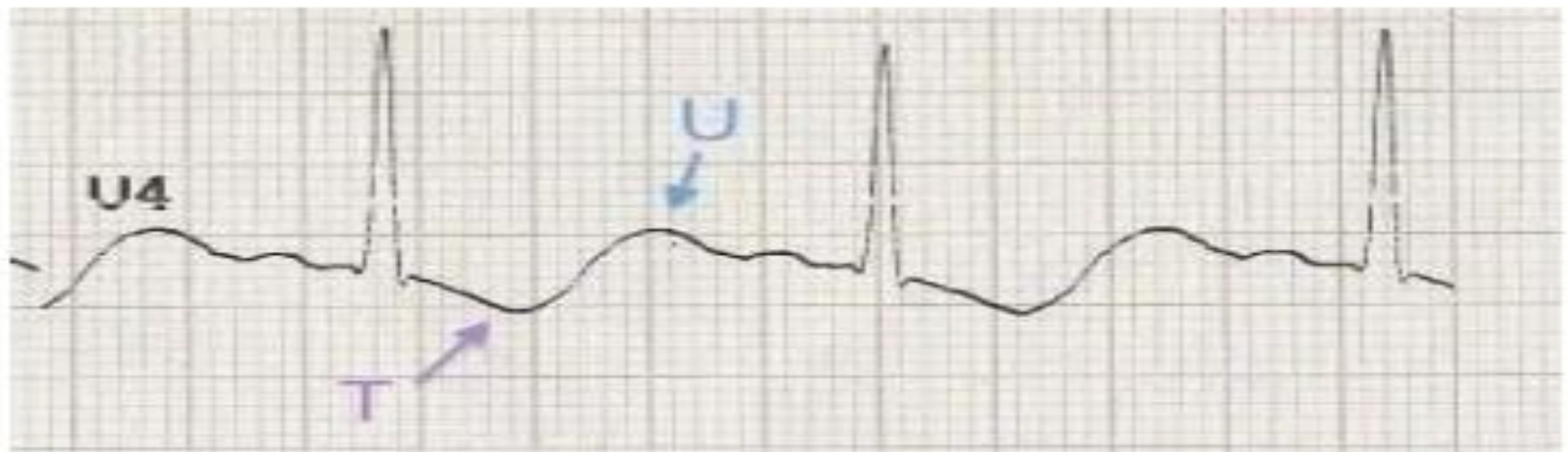
Class	Subclass	Drug	Pharmacologic Effect
I		Moricizine	Depression of rate of increase of action potential
	IA	Quinidine	Increased AP duration, and increased atrial and ventricular ERP; increased JT interval; vagolytic action
		Procainamide	
		Disopyramide	
	IB	Lidocaine, Mexiletine, Tocainide	Decreased AP duration but increased ventricular ERP; unchanged QRS complex; unchanged JT interval
	IC	Propafenone	Depressed rate of increase of action potential, causing widening of QRS complex; unchanged AP duration, but increased atrial and ventricular ERP; unchanged JT interval
		Flecainide (Encainide)	
II		Beta-blockers	Inhibition of beta-adrenergic receptors
III		Amiodarone	Increased AP duration
		Sotalol	Increased JT interval
		Bretylum	
IV		Verapamil, Diltiazem	Blockade of Ca <sup>++</sup> channels

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# Electrolyte Imbalance

Potassium Imbalance

Calcium and Magnesium Imbalance



**Hypokalaemia:** T wave inversion and prominent U waves



**QU interval:** The apparent pseudo-prolonged QT interval is

### Hyperkalemia Before IV Calcium



### Hyperkalemia After IV Calcium



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A 14-year-old  
patient with renal failure and a  
potassium level of 7.7 mmol/L.  
The ECG shows the characteristic findings of  
hyperkalemia

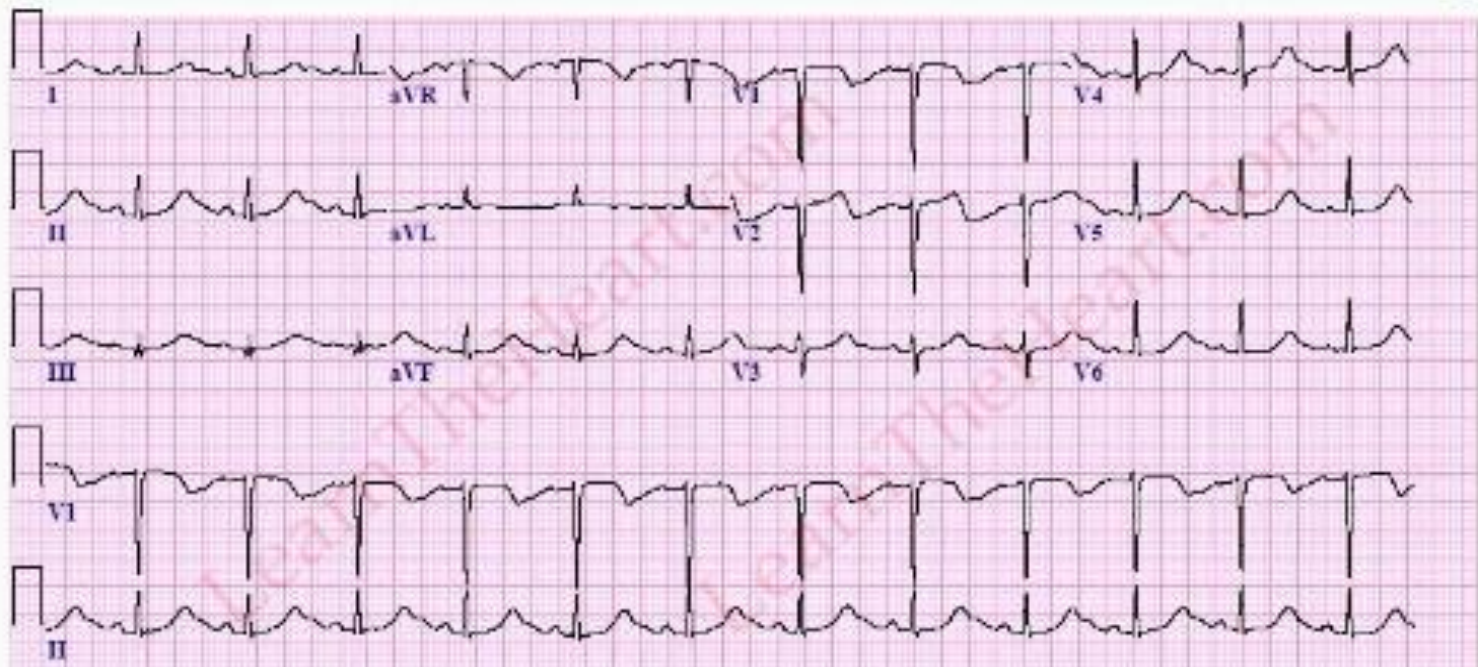




The ECG findings of hypocalcemia include:

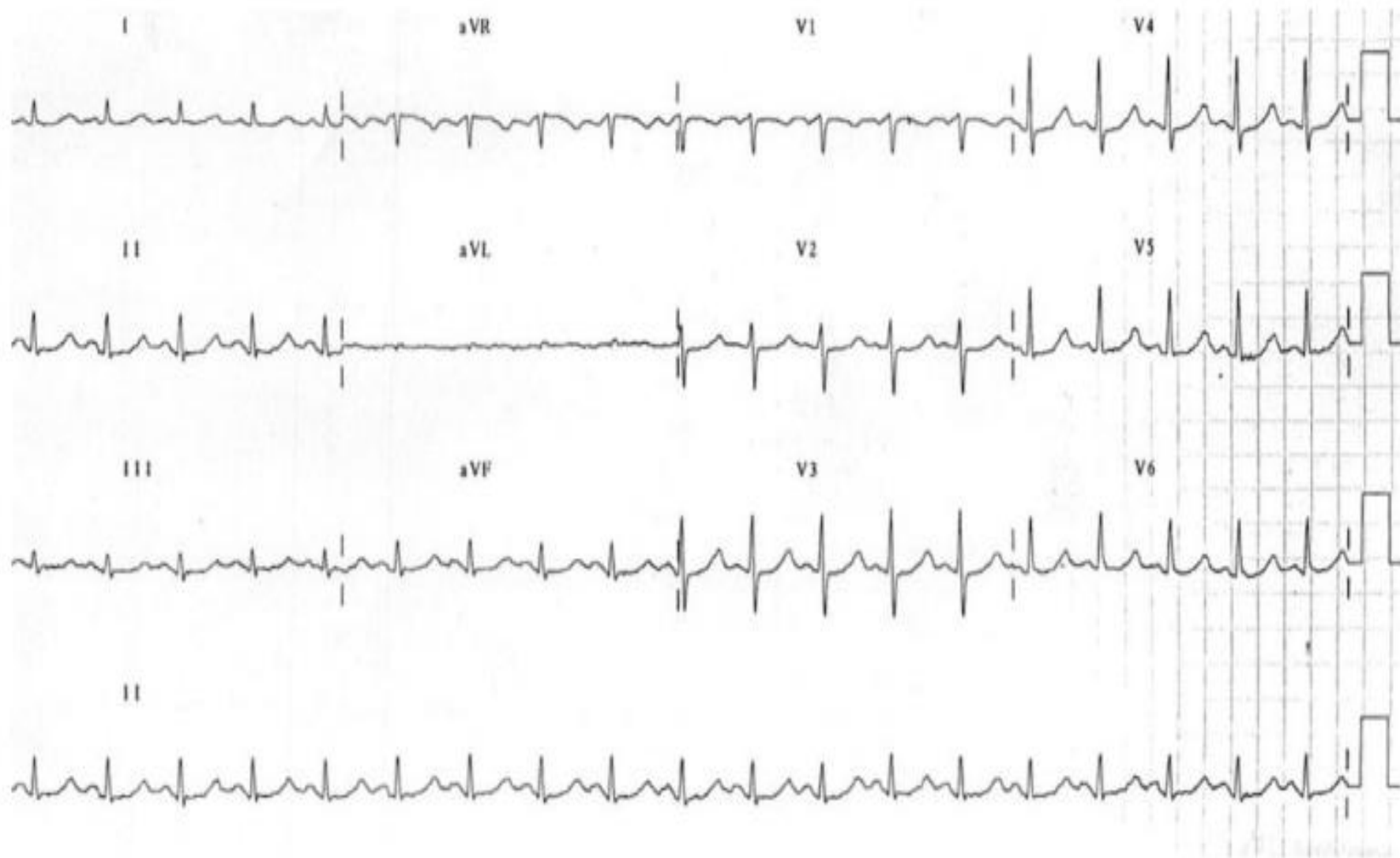
1. A prolonged QT interval
2. A lengthened ST segment

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## Example 1



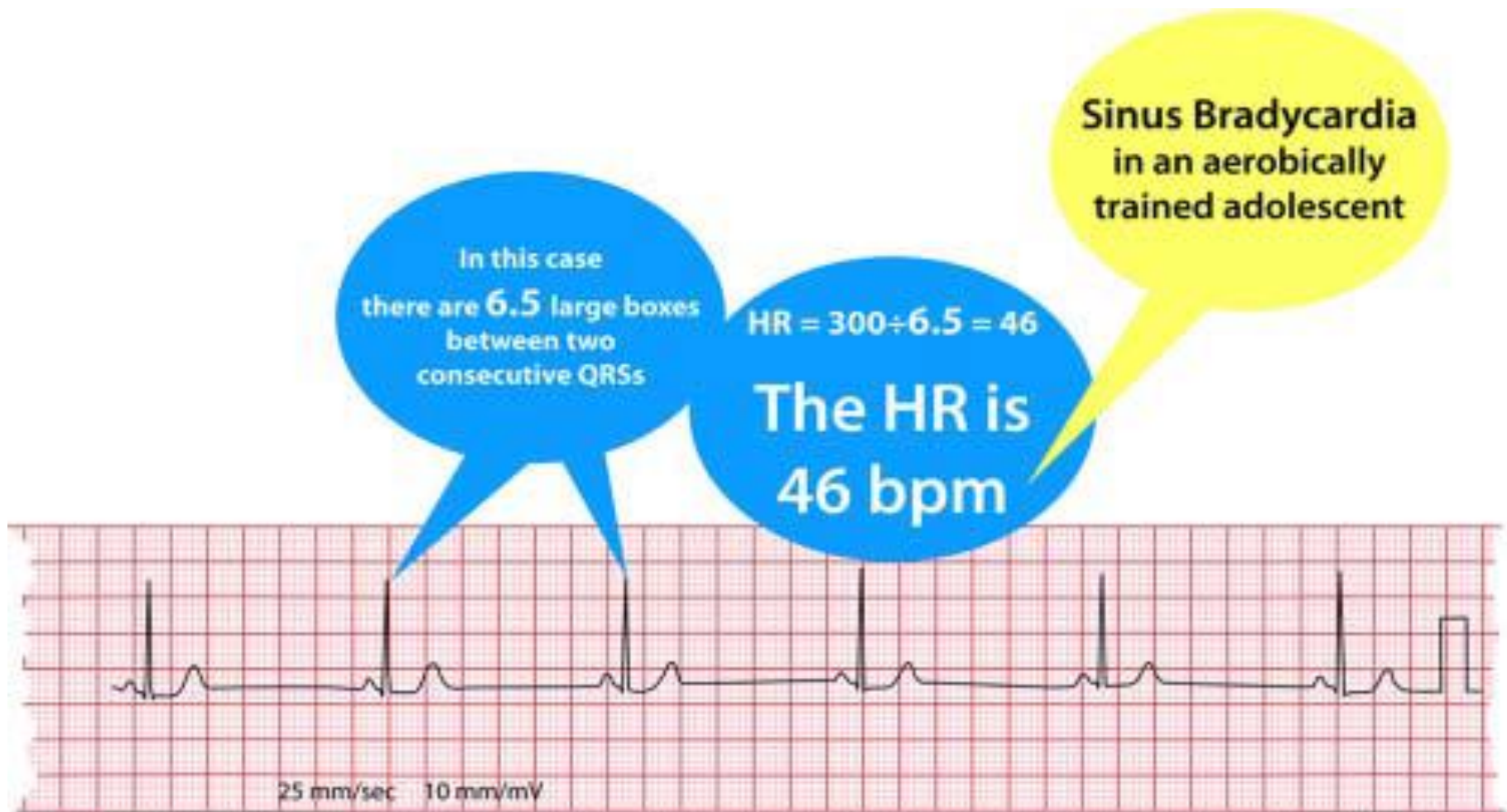
Hypomagnesaemia with QTc prolonged at 510ms

# Bradyarrhythmias

# Sinus Bradycardia

Sinus bradycardia may occur in the intensive care unit (ICU) setting during airway suctioning, elevated intracranial pressure, hypoxia, hypoglycemia, hypercalcemia, and acidosis. Drugs in therapeutic or toxic doses (e.g., digoxin, beta-blockers, amiodarone) may also cause sinus bradycardia. Surgical injury or trauma to the sinus node may also result in persistent sinus bradycardia

# Sinus Bradycardia



# Sinus Bradycardia in Children

Age	Rate (bpm)
Infants and children to 2 yr of age	<90
Children age 2–6 yr	<80
Children age 6–11 yr	<70
Children older than 11 yr	<60

bpm, beats per minute.

# Atrioventricular Block

Atrioventricular block may be congenital, related to changes in autonomic tone, or develop in association with a number of disease states

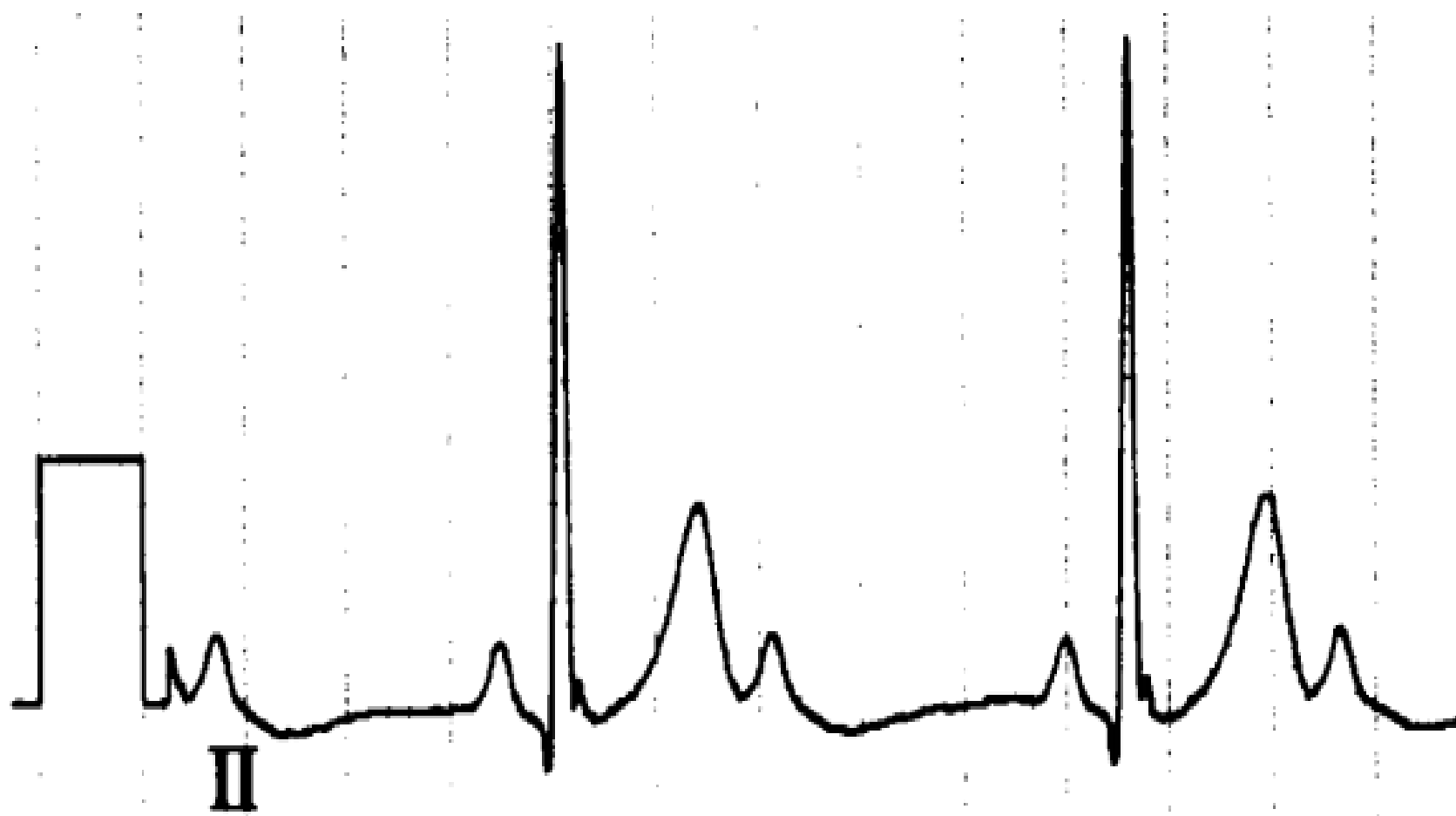
First-degree AV block is present when the PR interval is longer than the age-specific norm.. As an isolated finding, first-degree AV block is benign and warrants no specific treatment or follow-up. When part of an evolving disease state or if there is associated bundle branch block, attention should be paid to the possible development of more advanced AV block

Increased parasympathetic (vagal) tone	Airway suctioning
	Intubation
	Pain
	Bowel distention
	Vasovagal syncope
Metabolic disorders	Hypokalemia
	Hyperkalemia
	Hypomagnesemia
	Hypocalcemia
	Hypercalcemia
	Hypoglycemia
Associated with congenital heart disease	Heterotaxies, especially "polysplenia"
	Congenitally corrected transposition of the great arteries
	Persistent left SVC with absent right SVC
Postcardiac surgery	VSD, especially in congenitally corrected transposition
	AV canal
	Others, much more rarely
Congenital complete atrioventricular block	
Hypothermia	
Infectious diseases	Rubella
	Mumps
	Lyme disease
	Rocky Mountain spotted fever
	Chagas disease (Trypanosomiasis)
	Rheumatic fever
	Diphtheria
	Enteroviral myocarditis
	Perivalvular abscess
Myopathies	Myotonic dystrophy
	Duchenne's muscular dystrophy
	Polymyositis

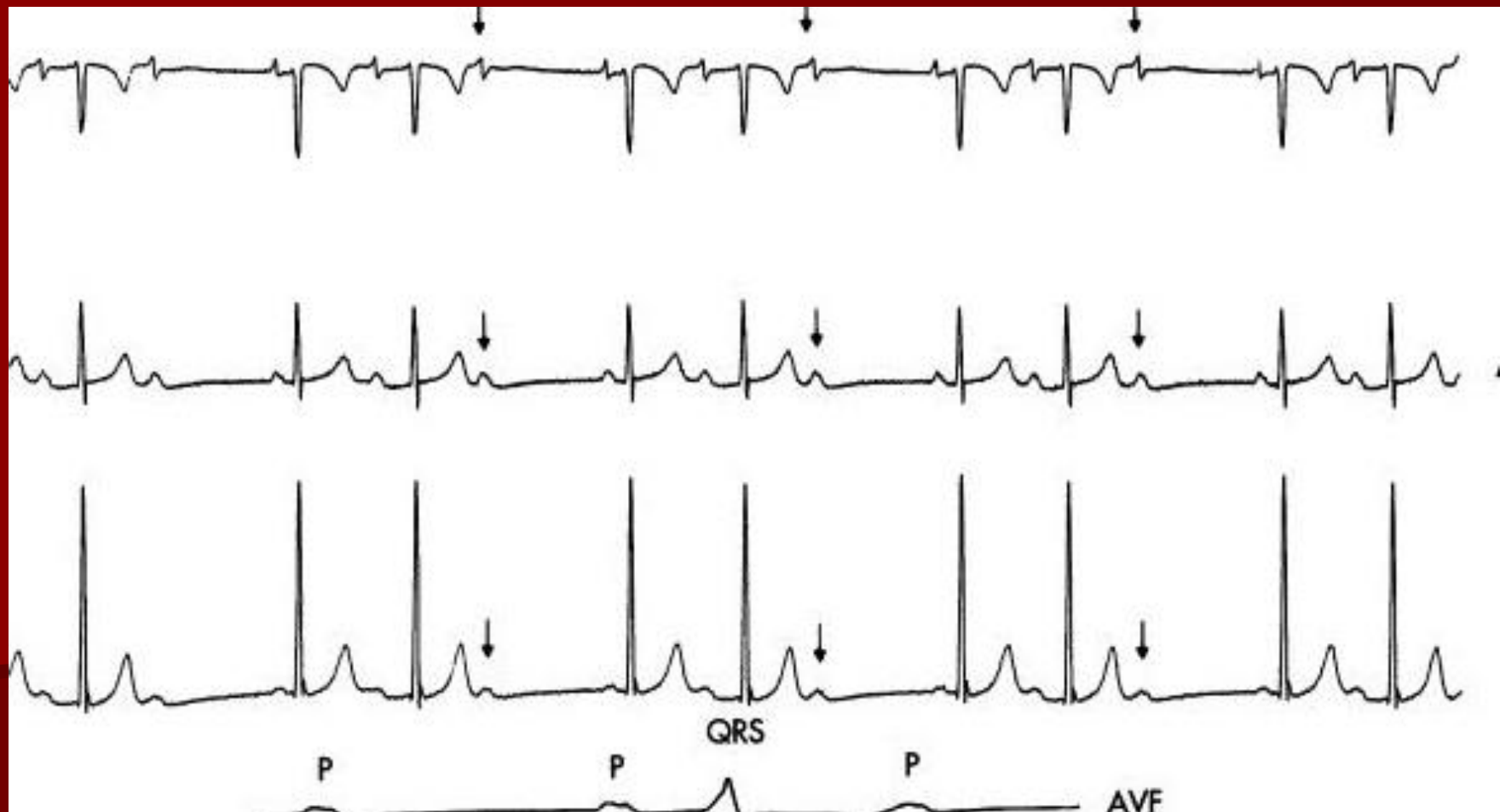


# Second-degree atrioventricular block

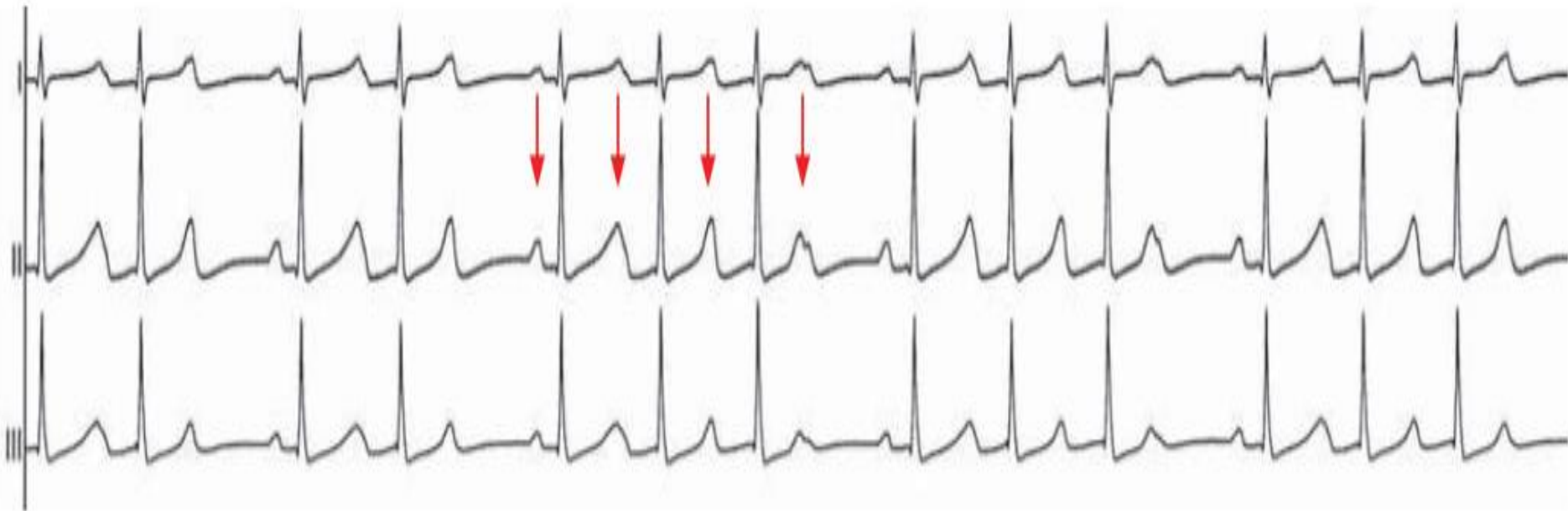
In second-degree AV block some P waves are conducted and others are not. The type most commonly encountered is Wenckebach block (also known as Mobitz type I block) which is characterized by progressive lengthening of the PR interval



Second-degree AV block is present when an atrial depolarization intermittently is not conducted to the ventricles resulting in the appearance of a “dropped beat.” Mobitz type I second-degree AV block (Wenckebach AV conduction) exhibits a gradual prolongation of the PR interval before the nonconducted P wave

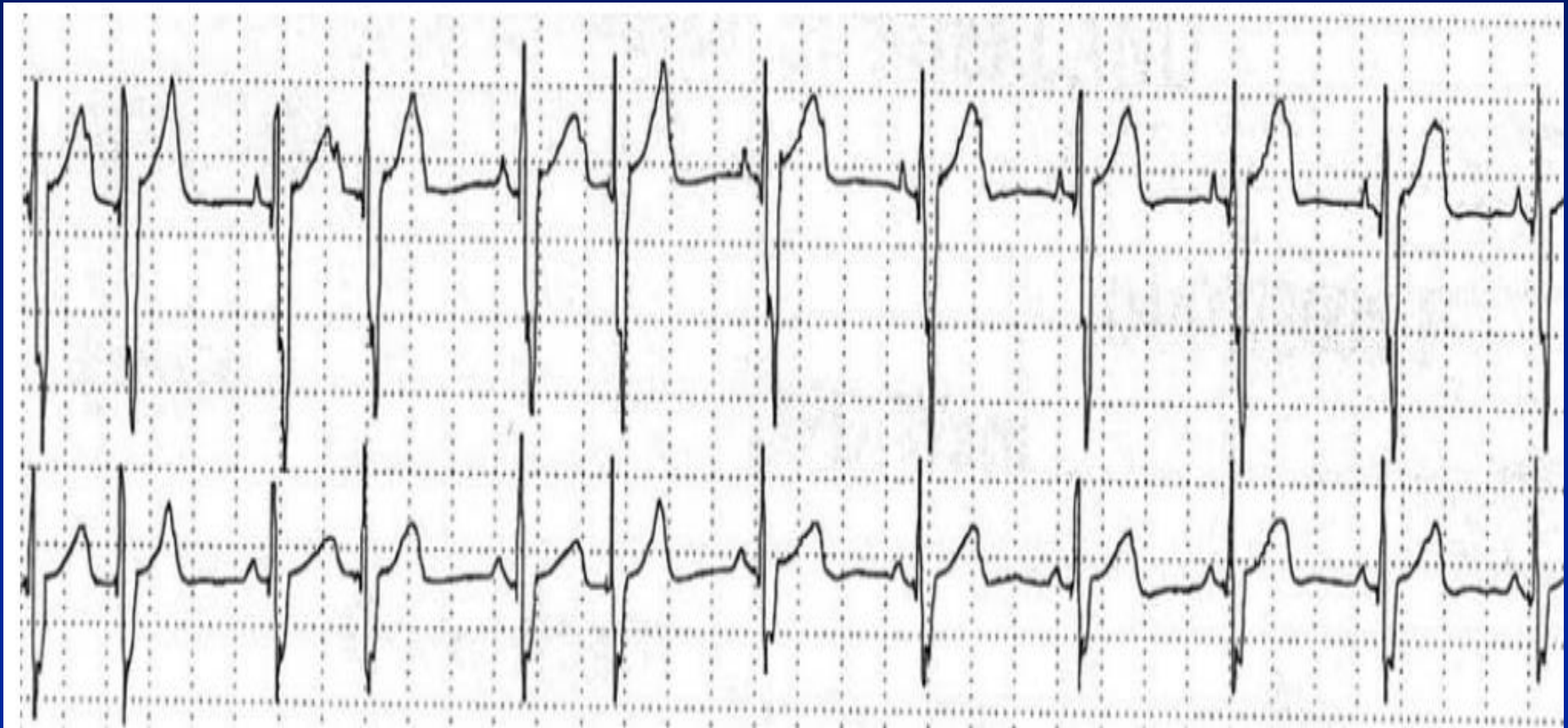


the PR interval  
lengthens over two or three beats before the third or fourth P wave is not conducted, so we have  
varying 3:2 and 4:3 conduction. P waves sometimes merge  
with the previous T waves and are less easy to see (arrows).



**Figure 28.2**

3:2 Wenckebach conduction followed by  
2:1 conduction. 2:1 AV conduction may result from Mobitz I or Mobitz II conduction  
but here it is clearly Mobitz I because of the 3:2 conduction

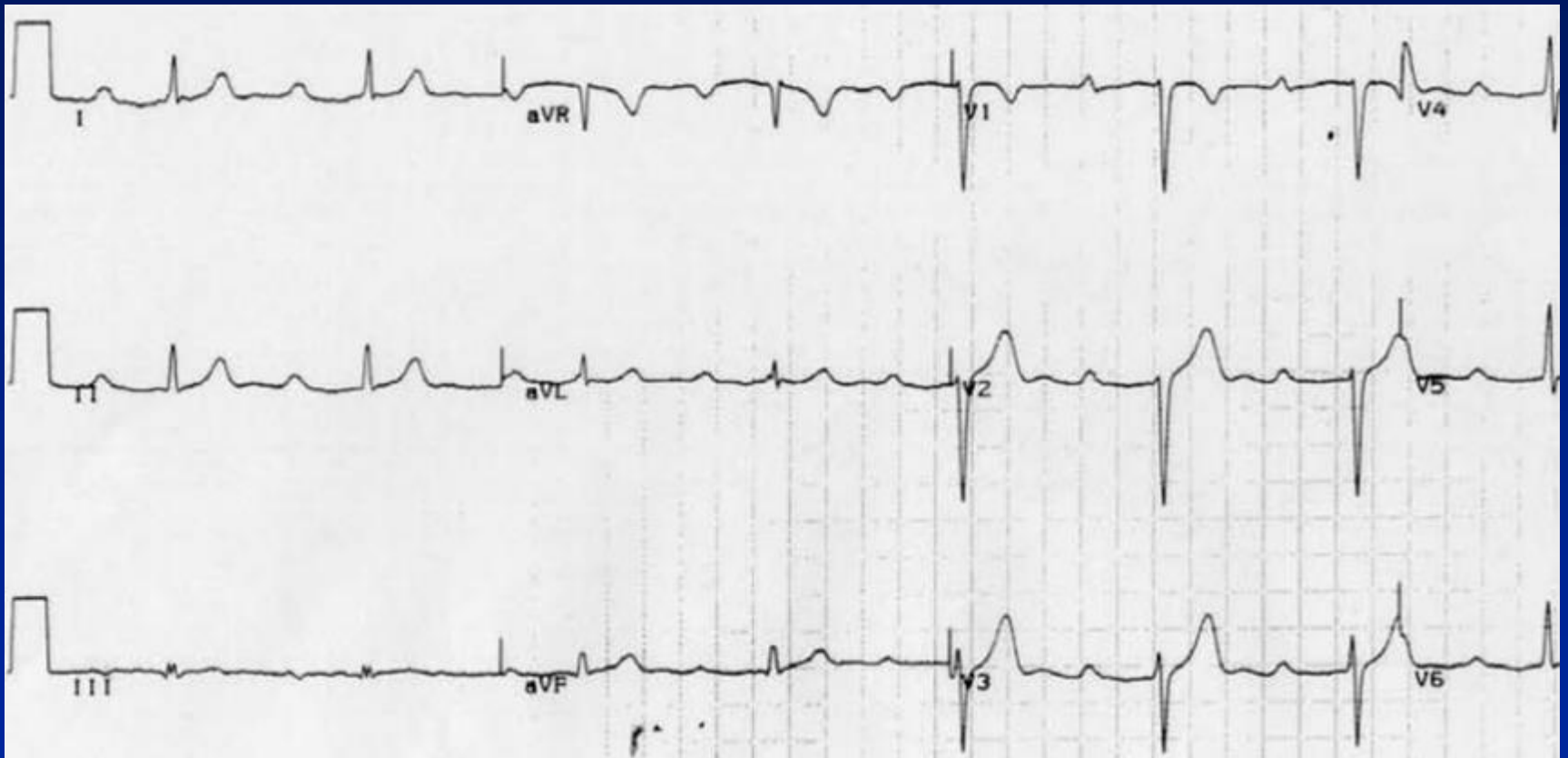


a 21-year-old man with congenitally corrected transposition of the great arteries. On ambulatory ECG recording he was noted to have non-conducted beats. This may not be classic Mobitz II block because he has a slightly prolonged PR interval all the time and his QRS is only slightly wider than normal



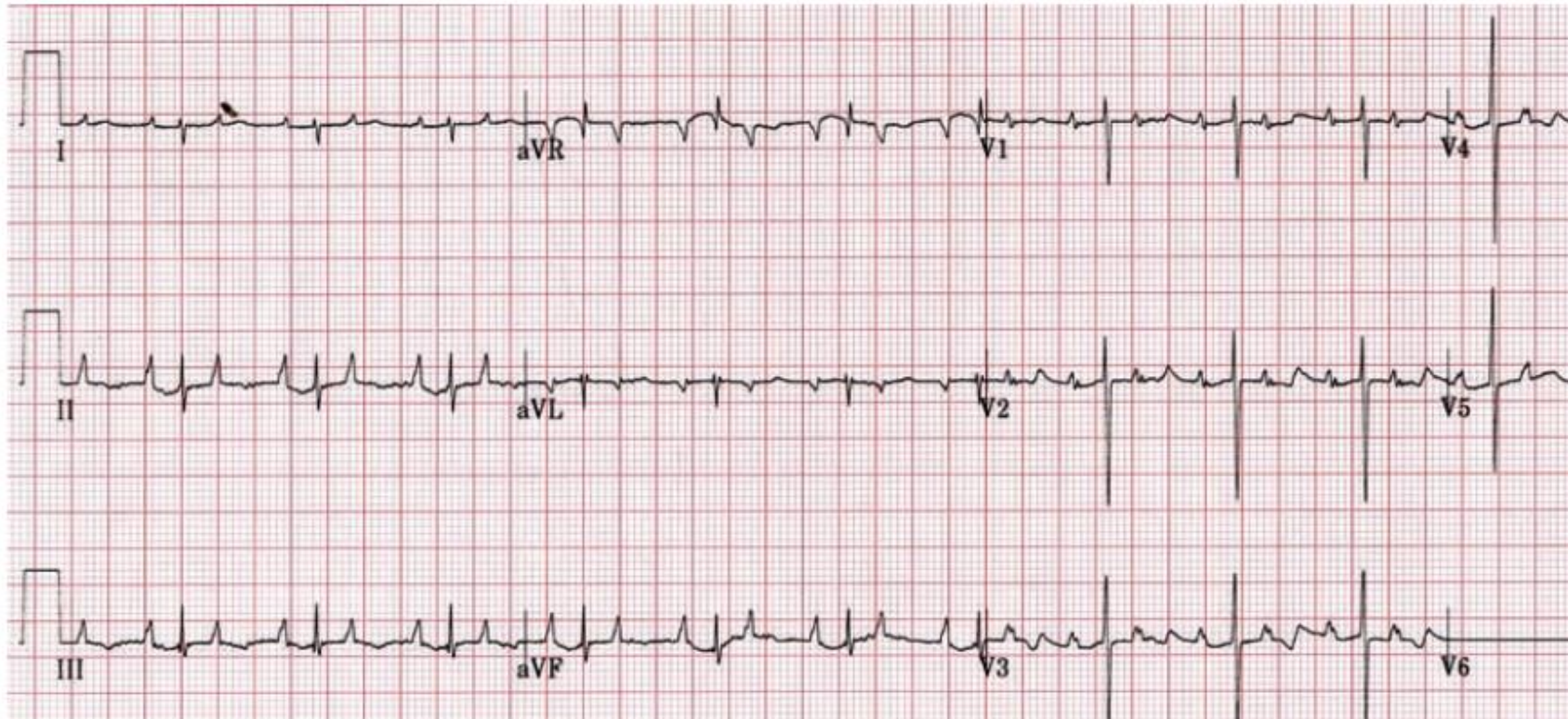
In the presence of stable 2:1, 3:1, or 4:1 conduction there is no opportunity to observe prolongation of the PR interval before the block, so characterization as Mobitz type I or type II AV block is not appropriate and this is best described as high-grade second-degree AV block

a PR interval of around 400 ms in a child with a small ventricular septal defect. AV conduction remained 1:1 during exercise testing and on ambulatory monitoring and did not change during 15 years of follow-up





another example of constant 2:1 AV conduction from an asymptomatic teenager with a normal heart. This needs to be distinguished from non-conducted atrial bigeminy (see Chapter 11) but note that here the PP interval is regular and the P wave morphology is constant (this is best seen in more than one lead)

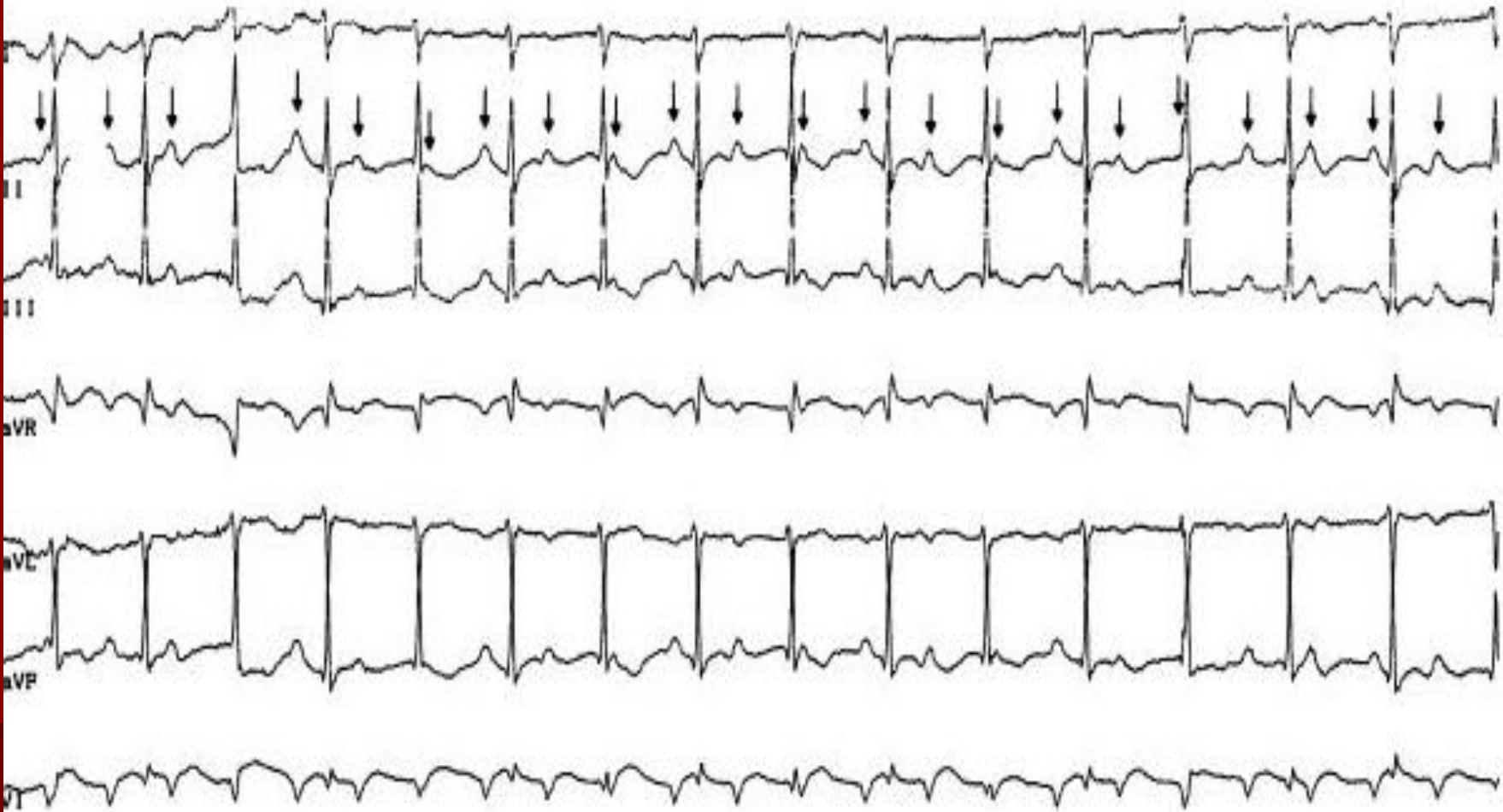


# Complete atrioventricular block



Third-degree or complete heart block (CHB) may be congenital or acquired and indicates that no atrial impulses are conducted to the ventricles ( Fig. 8-4 ). The ventricular rate is maintained

solely by escape pacemakers below the site of block in the AV node /



The management of CHB is guided by the age of the patient, the degree of symptoms and whether it is acquired or congenital. The acute treatment of symptomatic CHB involves the use of chronotropic agents such as isoproterenol or atropine. If medical therapy is not effective or insufficient, some form of temporary pacing should be initiated until permanent pacemaker implantation can be performed. Patients with congenital CHB and a structurally normal heart may be completely asymptomatic, especially if their escape pacemaker has a relatively normal rate and increases with exercise



a 12-year-old girl who presented with syncope. The ventricular bradycardia is profound, with a rate of 28/min. Her heart was structurally normal and the poor R wave progression in the chest leads probably reflects ventricular dilation. The age of onset of her heart block, and its cause, remain unknown. However, an ECG in the referring hospital records, when she was seen with a murmur at 4 years of age, also showed complete AV block

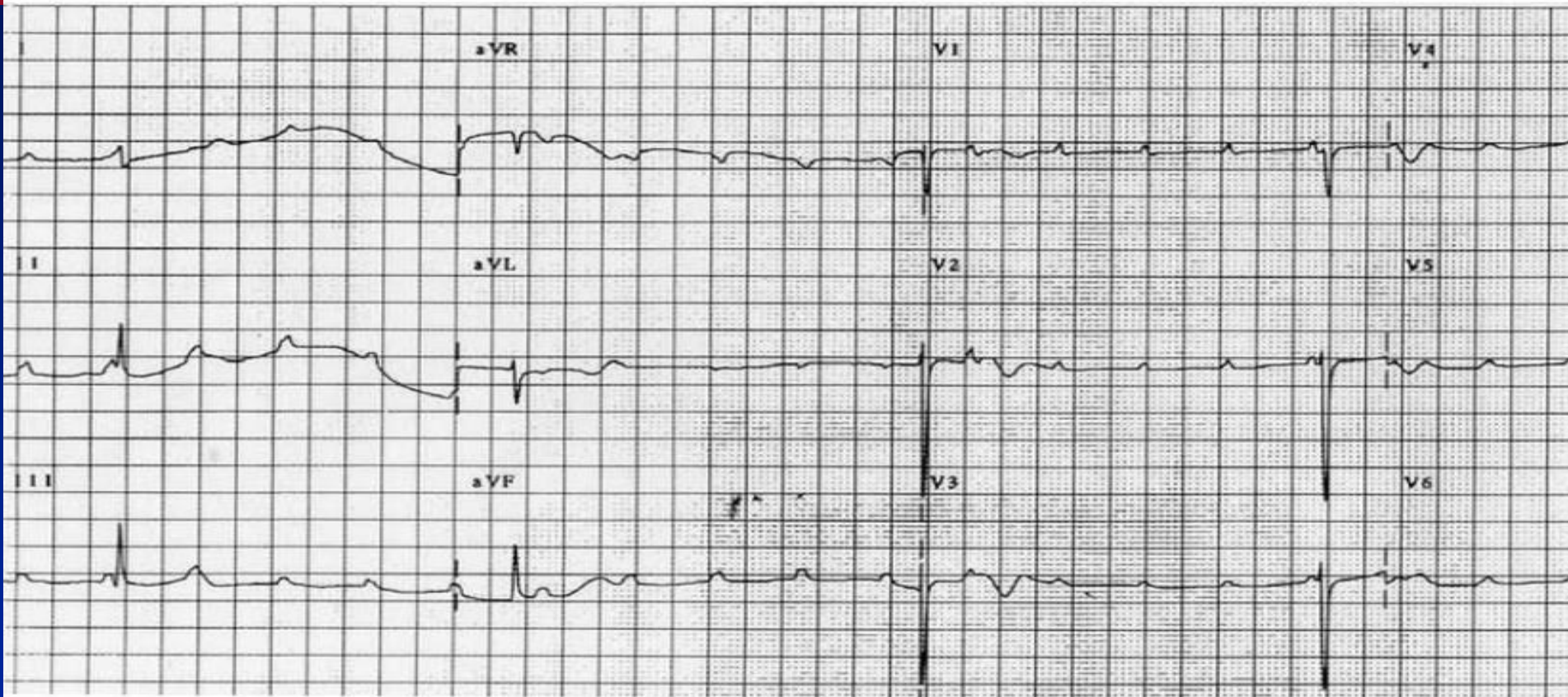


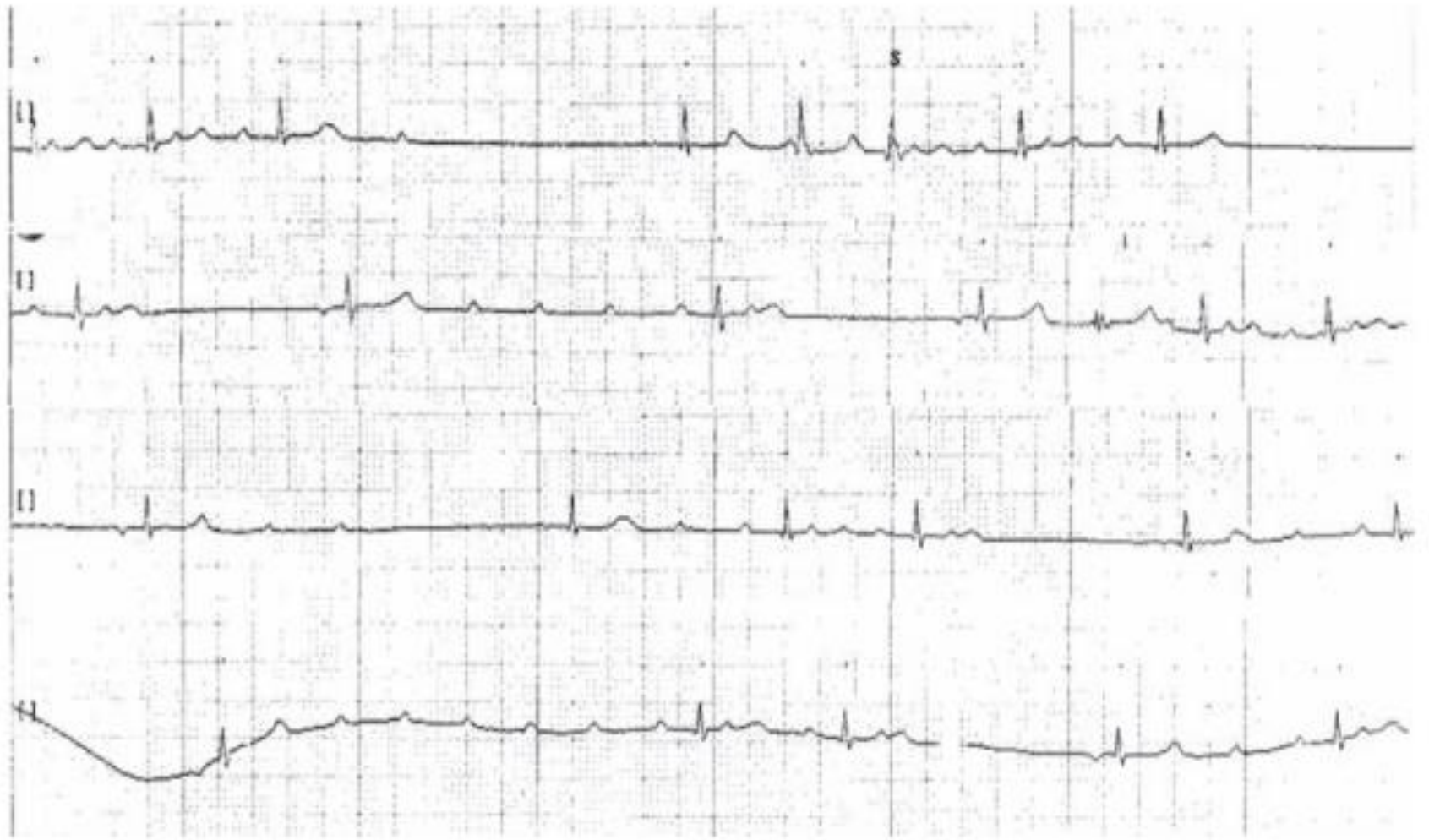
Figure 29.5

## Sinus node dysfunction and sinoatrial disease

Sinus node dysfunction describes abnormalities of sinus node automaticity and sinoatrial conduction that produce a variety of ECG abnormalities, including sinus bradycardia, sinus pauses, sinus arrest, sinoatrial block, and atrial tachycardias



Figure 30.4





Time: 06:11:26

Minimum heart rate

25 mm/s 5 mm/mV HR: 37 bpm



Time: 20:53:45

Maximum heart rate

25 mm/s 5 mm/mV HR: 102 bpm

