Image in cardiology

Atrial Fibrillation: Misleading Physical Examination

Fibrilación auricular. La exploración física nos engaña

Juan C. Bonaque,* Rosa M. Soto, and Ramón Rubio-Patón
Servicio de Cardiología, Hospital General Universitario Santa Lucía, Cartagena, Murcia, Spain

Figure 1.

Figure 2.

Figure 3.

A 70-year-old man presented to the emergency department of our hospital with acute heart failure in the context of atrial fibrillation with rapid ventricular response (Figure 1). Physical examination revealed an irregular pulse, with moist rales in lung fields and lower extremity edema. In addition, a simultaneous electrocardiographic recording disclosed the absence of heart sounds during short diastoles. This finding of “silent” heartbeats led us to perform an echocardiogram, which revealed the absence of heart sounds during short diastoles. This unusual echocardiographic finding is clinically relevant as it demonstrates that cardiac auscultation can underestimate the heart rate of patients with atrial fibrillation.

* Corresponding author:
E-mail address: jc_bonaque@hotmail.es (J.C. Bonaque).
Available online 14 April 2015

http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.rec.2014.12.021
1885-5857/© 2014 Sociedad Española de Cardiología. Published by Elsevier España, S.L.U. All rights reserved.