

Method and apparatus for cyclic ventricular pacing starting at a rate just above the intrinsic atria) firing rate (overdrive pacing), followed by relaxation to a rate just below the intrinsic atrial firing rate (ventricular escape). The method and apparatus can be applied to one or both ventricles, and can utilize one or more electrodes per ventricle. The electrode(s) can be applied to inner or outer ventricular surfaces. Relaxation protocols as a function of time can be linear, curvilinear to include exponential, or mixtures thereof. Furthermore, relaxation protocols can include one or more periods of time during which the pacing rate is held constant. Typically, the average ventricular pacing rate using this invention will be slightly greater than the intrinsic atrial firing rate, though alternate embodiments that encompass average ventricular pacing rates that are equal to or slightly less than the intrinsic atrial firing rate are also envisioned. Application of this method and apparatus to a heart in need thereof will produce a heart with an optimally minimized energy output requirement.

