

Stroke prevention in primary care: Arrhythmia Nurse Specialist resource for primary care to optimise management of AF patients

Summary Front Sheet

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to inform members of the local health economy of the results of a pilot organised by the South London Cardiac and Stroke Network [SLCSN] which took place in Sutton & Merton in 2011.

The aim of the pilot was to determine if providing GP practices with support from an arrhythmia nurse specialist would increase the numbers of patients at high risk of stroke being prescribed an oral anticoagulant to reduce their risk of stroke.

Introduction/Background

The pilot built on previous SLCSN collaborative work with local groups to improve outcomes for patients with AF.

Pilot practices attended a SLCSN education event, downloaded GRASP-AF (often with IT support), then received a visit from the arrhythmia nurse specialist. The nurse worked with GPs, providing arrhythmia clinical expertise to aid identification of patients at high risk of stroke not currently receiving anticoagulation, who should be invited in for review with the GP.

Executive summary

The pilot found that providing GP practices with education and support from an experienced arrhythmia nurse specialist did lead to an increase in the numbers of high risk patients being prescribed an anticoagulant to reduce their stroke risk.

The GRASP-AF results showed a greater proportion of AF patients on optimum therapy in the pilot practices compared to the national average.

An extra 2.4 strokes annually were prevented in the pilot practices saving a recurring £3,020. If extrapolated to the entire South London cluster there is potential each year to prevent 73 strokes and save a recurring £95,608.

Recommendations

- GRASP-AF toolkit promoted for use in all GP practices in South London.
- Practices encouraged, or incentivised if necessary, to share anonymised data via CHART-Online in order to demonstrate improvement.
- Education and clinical expertise offered to practices to support use of GRASP and optimum management of AF, particularly stroke risk assessment and prevention.
- Support provided by hospital based Arrhythmia Nurse Specialists where possible, to foster closer links between primary and secondary care.
- All practices in South London to use the SLCSN AF pathway for primary care in conjunction with the Arrhythmia Traffic Lights.

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