

Wandle Practices Commissioning Group

Atrial Fibrillation Screening Project 2009/10

Background

Stroke is the third most common cause of death in England yet an estimated 200,000 strokes per year are preventable. Atrial fibrillation (AF) is a major risk factor for stroke and increases the severity of the stroke. AF is the most common of all the cardiac arrhythmias and affects more than 600,000 people in England. Current data indicates that the identification and management of AF is sub-optimal and that improvements in this area would dramatically reduce the number of strokes occurring per year.

- 12,500 strokes per year are thought to be directly attributable to AF.
- NICE estimate that approximately 40% of patients in whom Warfarin is indicated are not receiving it.

The financial case for preventing strokes is compelling. The cost of a stroke due to AF is estimated to be £11,900 in the first year. Many people require long-term medical and social care input so there are also variable, but often high, costs on an ongoing basis. In contrast, the cost of maintaining a patient on Warfarin for a year is £200-£400. The number needed to treat (NNT) to prevent 1 stroke is 37.

NHS Wandsworth is part of a NHS Improvement National Priority Project for Stroke Prevention in Primary Care. The project is focusing on Atrial Fibrillation identification and management:

1. Increasing the **identification of AF** in primary care, e.g. promoting (opportunistic) manual pulse checks and development/embedding of referral pathways.
2. **Treatment optimisation**, e.g. reviewing existing AF patients' medication, development of AF management protocols and possible development of community treatment/monitoring.
3. **Review of existing services** – in order to ensure the increase in demand can be proactively managed further down the pathway, e.g. anticoagulation service, cardio-version and modelling the potential impact of new anticoagulation drugs on existing services and the arrhythmia care co-ordinator role.
4. **Education** – patient and clinician study/training days will be run throughout the project.

Wandle Practices Commissioning Group has funded a work stream using freed up resources to contribute to the stroke prevention project.

Project Outline

Between October 09 and February 10, patients over 65 years of age who presented in general practice (mostly during the flu vaccination campaign) were screened for irregular pulse using simple pulse palpation. For each patient screened, the practice earned £2. Practices were required to do an audit of AF prevalence at the start and at the end of the project.

Results

23/25 practices participated.

	Oct 09	Feb 10
Number over 65	15250	14839
Over 65s with AF	779	856
Prevalence	5.1%	5.77%

Increase in prevalence = 0.67%

Number of patients screened = 6828 (45% of over 65s) at a cost of £13,656

Number with irregular pulse = 410 (6% of those screened)

Number of patients with existing AF coded during the project (i.e. previously known, but not coded or new patients joining list) = 125

Number of new cases of AF identified as a result of screening = 27

- Cost of project £13,656
- 45% of eligible population screened
- 27 new cases of AF
- 125 newly coded cases