

Stroke Prevention; Addressing Atrial Fibrillation in Primary Care A National Priority Project

The South London Cardiac & Stroke Networks are currently participating in a NHS improvement national priority project, looking at increasing stroke prevention through the identification and management of atrial fibrillation (AF) in primary care.

Why?

Stroke is the third largest cause of death in England (2.5% prevalence), yet an estimated 200,000 strokes per year are preventable. Atrial fibrillation (AF) is a major risk factor for stroke, accounting for 14% of all strokes, 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.

What?

The main project aims are to;

- provide a strategic vision for improving and redesigning care for AF patients
- improve patient experience and ensure the timely and accurate diagnosis and treatment of AF
- support the appropriate transition of care between primary, secondary and community, ensuring provision of a streamlined and efficient AF care pathway
- support the development / commissioning of local arrhythmia services in line with evidenced based practice and healthcare for London review outcomes

How?

The way in which the work will be carried out will compliment local situation and priorities, but the following 4 areas will form the project structure;

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, cardioversion and modelling the potential impact of new anticoagulation drugs on existing services and ACC role
4. Education – patient and clinician study/training days will be run throughout the project.

Potential impact?

The project does not envisage creating any additional work, aiming rather to pull together existing areas of work into a manageable and achievable project. The following aspects are anticipated benefits for your service;

- support and guidance in increasing the identification of AF
- support in establishing which patients might be eligible and benefit most from Warfarin
- access to localised referral pathways to allow easier signposting of patients for appropriate treatments and services
- education to increase knowledge and confidence in managing AF in primary care.

Who?

The offer to participate in the initial pilot was open to all PCTs across South London. Currently NHS Bromley, Greenwich, Sutton & Merton and Wandsworth are involved in the pilot, with the long-term aim to roll out the project work to the remaining PCTs. This will allow sharing of ideas and lessons learnt from the pilot.

For further information, updates or to become part of this project, please contact Jennifer George at jennifer.george@slcsn.nhs.uk / 07876386368.