



News Release

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Registered Charity Number 1122442

Patients and MPs Called on to Fight NICE Refusal to Fund Vital Heart Rhythm Drug

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A heart charity is calling on MPs and patients to protest against a decision to refuse funding for a new drug that could improve the lives of thousands of people with Atrial Fibrillation, a heart rhythm disorder.

The Atrial Fibrillation Association says it is shocked at the draft guidance, by the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE), to deny the use of Dronedarone (Multaq) to NHS patients in England and Wales. The charity says the refusal will be extremely detrimental to many patients struggling to manage AF, who had looked to the launch of this innovative treatment as a chance to restore their long term health.

Conservative MP, John Maples, has tabled an **Early Day Motion** raising concern at the decision and calling on NICE to ensure patients, carers and health professionals are allowed to give evidence at its second appraisal meeting in February. AFA is urging as many MPs as possible to sign the EDM before then.

Recent, extensive trials have shown that Dronedarone (Multaq), the first new anti-arrhythmic drug (AAD) in more than twenty years, importantly demonstrated that it is the only anti-arrhythmic medication to improve long term cardiac health in AF patients.

The drug has already been approved for use in the USA and Europe with trials showing a reduction in the incidence of AF to a level at least equal to that of current AADs available, but with far fewer side effects than experienced by patients on available drugs. It is also suitable for up to 55% of AF patients diagnosed with Paroxysmal AF (who suffer with the condition intermittently).

In the UK almost one million people now suffer with Atrial Fibrillation and this number is rising due to an ageing population and higher survival rates from conditions which predispose the heart to AF.

For people over 40 years of age, there is a 1 in 4 life time risk of developing AF; for the younger population, this risk rises to 1 in 2.

1 in 3 stroke sufferers have AF – it is estimated to be directly responsible for at least 18% of all strokes in England and Wales. In AF, stroke is usually severe; one third of the victims die within one month; three-quarters die within the first year.

Dronedarone trials showed a reduction in hospitalisation and in the incidence of stroke. AFA believes this means that far from costing the NHS more, it will save both money and more importantly, lives.



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The Atrial Fibrillation Association wants AF patients and professionals involved in AF care and management to write to NICE by January 24th and ask it to rule to allow this medication to AF patients in England and Wales.

Alongside clinical leaders and nurse specialists, the Atrial Fibrillation Association, is demanding that NICE ensures patient representatives and arrhythmia specialist clinicians are allowed to present to the second Appraisal Committee meeting on 24 February 2010. Until this happens, NICE cannot claim that all of the relevant evidence been taken into account.

Editors Notes:

1. A Parliamentary Stakeholder Investigation will be hosted by John Maples MP to enable patients, clinicians and managers to vocalise their concerns about the negative guidance, discuss the clinical and cost effectiveness of dronedarone and consider arguments about innovations in healthcare. The meeting takes place on Wednesday 3 February 2010 from 4pm to 7pm at the House of Commons.
2. The EDM can be viewed at <http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=40151&SESSION=903>
3. The AFA Fact Sheet on Dronedarone (Multaq), can be viewed at <http://www.atrialfibrillation.org.uk/files/file/AFA%20Dronedarone%20Patient%20Info.pdf>
4. The NICE draft guidance can be viewed at <http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/index.jsp?action=article&o=46768>
5. Atrial Fibrillation Association's website is at www.atrialfibrillation.org.uk
6. For more information or to arrange interviews, please contact Jo Jerrome at Joanna@heartrhythmcharity.org.uk or telephone 01789 451 837.