



News Release

AFA, PO Box 1219, Chew Magna, Bristol, BS40 8WB, UK

Email: info@atrial-fibrillation.org.uk

Registered Charity Number 1122442

Local Atrial Fibrillation patient need to empower themselves to cut their risk of deadly stroke

5 December 2011, Shipston on Stour: The Atrial Fibrillation Association is calling for local patients with Atrial Fibrillation (AF) to educate themselves about their condition, ensuring they are getting the most appropriate treatment to avoid the real possibility of suffering a debilitating or potentially deadly stroke.

The AF Report published today has found major improvements are needed in the treatment of AF, a common irregular heart rhythm condition to avoid a stroke epidemic.

The charity says whether you get the best treatment can depend on where you live because of conflicting guidelines and access to services. Some 12,000 strokes in the UK each year are a direct result of atrial fibrillation (AF). The condition increases the risk of stroke by nearly 500% and many of these strokes could be prevented with more use of anticoagulation therapy and an improved continuity of care. Many stroke survivors have described having a stroke as being 'a fate worse than death.'

The report found that despite widespread availability of these treatments, only 18% of AF patients who could benefit from anticoagulation receive adequate therapy, which is why patients need to become aware of the treatment options available and become their own advocates to make sure they are getting the best treatment for them.



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The report calls also for the introduction of a targeted programme of routine manual pulse checks by GPs, and urges equal access to AF treatments and services, regardless of location.

AFA chief executive and founder Trudie Lobban said: "Given the high burden and the high rate of under-treatment, we are also launching www.afstrokerisk.org which enables anyone with AF to answer a simple set of questions which generate a comprehensive report on their personal stroke risk. We urge anyone with AF to use this new tool."

The report says that local GPs need to become better educated about how to diagnose AF and the latest treatments, documenting many instances where doctors overlook symptoms, under-use treatments and where they fail to interpret correctly the amount of risk that a patient is willing to accept for a given benefit.

It is also necessary for the government to support research into the impact of AF on the lives of patients and how better to identify those at risk.

AFA says even if you don't currently have AF, you should become familiar with your pulse rate and know how to detect the signs of an irregular heartbeat. The charity urges patients to read the report at www.preventaf-strokecrisis.org and to get in touch if they need further advice.

ENDS

Editor's Notes



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1. For more information, or to speak to experts about AF, contact Trudie Lobban at Trudie@afa.org.uk or call 07778 233999
2. The AFA website can be found at <http://www.atrialfibrillaion.org.uk>
3. More details about AF and this report can be found at <http://www.preventaf-strokecrisis.org>