

## **Heart Rhythm Charity welcomes SMC's decision on approval of new anticoagulant for Scotland**

Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2012, Warwickshire: Atrial Fibrillation Association (AFA) welcomes the decision by the Scottish Medicines Consortium (SMC) to approve Rivaroxaban (an anticoagulant) for use by healthcare practitioners working in NHS Scotland. AFA has been instrumental in demonstrating to the SMC how the drug will improve the quality of treatment received by eligible NHS Scotland patients suffering from non-valvular Atrial Fibrillation (AF).

Following the SMC approval, eligible NHS patients in Scotland with non-valvular AF will be among the first in Britain to receive the once daily tablet for stroke prevention since warfarin. Rivaroxaban has been accepted for use in NHS Scotland for patients displaying one or more of the risk factors for stroke. These include; congestive heart failure, hypertension, an age greater than 75 years, diabetes mellitus, prior stroke or transient ischemic attack. Atrial Fibrillation patients experience a stroke risk that is elevated fivefold compared to the rest of the population.

Trudie Lobban MBE, Founder and CEO of the Atrial Fibrillation Association comments:

'Rivaroxaban is welcomed as a treatment option for AF patients at high risk of stroke. For more than fifty years warfarin has been the only option available for prevention of stroke in AF, while safe and effective for some, its complex management and narrow therapeutic levels made it a challenging or even an unsafe option for some people diagnosed with AF. We are delighted that the 75% of high risk patients sub optimally treated can now be assessed and protected from the risk of stroke. We urge all doctors to ensure AF patients in their care are assessed and appropriately managed, and that opportunistic pulse checks are included in routine appointments in order to detect AF. Know your pulse, the easiest way to detect AF'.

There are approximately 70'000 AF patients in Scotland and 680'000 throughout the rest of the UK. The Atrial Fibrillation Association hopes to influence more medicine review bodies throughout the UK and improve the treatment received by non-valvular AF patients.

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### **Notes:**

1. Atrial Fibrillation Association (AFA) is an international charity which provides information, support and access to established, new or innovative treatments for Atrial Fibrillation (AF).
2. AF is the most common 'arrhythmia' – a heart rhythm disturbance. It is estimated that more than one million people in England are living with AF, and between 50,000 and 100,000 new diagnoses are made each year.