



News Release

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Registered Charity Number 1122442

Heart Charity Backs Report Into Atrial Fibrillation Crisis

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The UK's charity that helps people with Atrial Fibrillation, a heart rhythm disorder, has endorsed a new report highlighting a crisis in preventable strokes.

The Atrial Fibrillation Association welcomes the report, "How Can We Avoid a Stroke Crisis?" that was launched this week in the European Parliament by Action for Stroke Prevention, a group of health experts from across Europe.

The report calls for urgent coordinated action to avoid an epidemic of preventable strokes that leave many atrial fibrillation (AF) patients mentally and physically disabled or dead, every year.

The report is proposing measures to tackle stroke in patients with AF, the most common, sustained abnormal heart rhythm and a major cause of stroke. The group is calling on EU policy makers and Member State governments to act before the increasing frequency of these strokes becomes a major public health crisis.

Six million people in Europe are affected by Atrial Fibrillation. Many more have the condition but don't yet know it. The Atrial Fibrillation Association has been running a 'Know Your Pulse' campaign as one of the easiest ways of detecting an irregular heartbeat and is calling for regular pulse checks to be a routine part of GP surgery activities.

AFA backs the reports recommendations of improving patient education and stroke risk assessment; taking new approaches to prevention; facilitating the exchange of best practice between Member States; developing strategies to support adherence to guidelines; and the provision of equal and adequate administration of therapy for patients with AF.

Atrial Fibrillation Fast Facts:

- AF affects almost 1 million people in the UK and costs 1% of the annual NHS budget
- An episode of AF can last from a few minutes to many weeks and being a progressive disorder, up to 25% of initially self-terminating AF will become permanent in 5 years, and 50% by 10 years.
- There are 16,000 strokes annually in patients with AF in England which result in: 4,300 deaths in hospital, 3,200 discharges to residential care, 8,500 deaths within the first year.



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- The annual cost of stroke to the UK economy is £8.9 billion – that is £44,000 per stroke victim (Saka et al, 2009). So detecting AF and reducing the risk of stroke by effective management is VERY cost efficient.
- The easiest way to detect AF is, to feel the pulse.

Edito's Notes:

1. The report can be found at <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/new-health-report-exposes-imminent-risk-of-a-stroke-crisis-in-europe-78820762.html>
2. The AFA website can be found at <http://www.atrialfibrillation.org.uk>
3. For more information, please contact Jo Jerrome at jo@atrialfibrillation.org.uk