

Foot Pulse checks in patients with diabetes identifies new AF cases in Durham and Darlington

Patients with diabetes undergo an annual review. This includes a foot check where pulses are assessed. Therefore any patient with an irregular pulse can be detected as part of the review process.

Durham and Darlington Podiatry Services (covering North Durham CCG, Darlington CCG and Durham Dales Easington and Sedgfield CCG areas) were interested to run a pilot project examining how many patients with previously unknown AF could be detected in the diabetes foot check. Any patients detected with an irregular pulse were referred back to their GP for a 12-lead ECG to confirm or rule-out AF.

AF is the most common heart rhythm disturbance, affecting around one million people in the UK and commonly displays no symptoms in those affected. The aim is to increase awareness of AF and in turn reduce the number of strokes that occur as a result of undiagnosed and poorly treated AF.

Background Summary

Around 2.4% of the population are estimated to be living with AF, the current diagnosed prevalence rate is 1.6%, suggesting that approximately 474,000 people are living with undiagnosed AF across England

In the North East and North Cumbria region 76,800 people are estimated to be living with AF, with approximately 25,600 of those currently undetected.

Evidence indicates that those with untreated or sub-optimally treated AF are at higher risk of developing a stroke - with those that do requiring inpatient, post discharge, rehabilitation and long term care services costing an estimated £23,315 per patient.

Kate Mackay, AF Project Lead, AHSN, North East and North Cumbria



Support provided by AHSN

- Supported the pilot project offering backfill if needed.
- Supported and encouraged dissemination across the North East and North Cumbria through linking with Regional Podiatry Managers and the Northern Diabetes Footcare Network.
- Supported and encouraged spread and adoption through the national AHSN AF community.



Staff have been very tuned into the programme and recognise it as their clinical responsibility to help spot AF.

Linda Hicks, Podiatrist, County Durham and Darlington Foundation Trust.

Outcomes

- The pilot project ran for 3 months, from 1st January 2016 – 31st March 2016. The team of 45 podiatrists were trained prior to the project starting and continue to have updates.
- 5,000 patients had their feet checked within the 3 month period.
- 10 patients were identified with previously unknown AF.

Impact

- Extrapolating figures from 3 months to 12 month indicates that 40 new patients with AF could be identified annually across North Durham, Darlington and DDES CCGs. This would prevent 2 strokes per year – a cost-saving of £46,630 (1).
- Extrapolation shows that for every 500 patients with diabetes having their feet checked, one new case of AF could be identified.
- In 2013, the National Diabetes Information Service (NDIS), YHPHO estimated 231,777 people in the North East, North Cumbria, Hambleton and Richmondshire area with diabetes (2). Therefore 463 patients could be found with AF, preventing 23 strokes and saving £539,742 or in excess of £0.5M.
- Podiatry staff are already taking pulses and this would appear to be well placed opportunity to ensure patients with irregular pulses are being identified.

Ref: (1) National Audit Office. Progress in improving stroke care, Report on the findings from our modelling of stroke care provision (February 2010). NAO Report (HC 291 2009-2010). (2) NDIS, YHPHO. Levels of diabetes in the North East, North Cumbria, Hambleton and Richmondshire area. 2013 [Accessed www.yhpho.org.uk/resource/view.aspx?RID=189815]

Benefit

The benefits to increasing awareness of AF are to assist with diagnosis in those who were previously unaware of the condition.

Foot checks for patients with diabetes is a service which is currently provided, and it would seem sensible to ensure any patients with an irregular pulse are referred back to their GP to check for a possible diagnosis of AF.

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Next Steps and Plans for the Future

- Spread and adopt this work through engagement with the Regional Podiatry Managers.
- Spread and adopt this work through engagement with the Northern Diabetes Footcare Network.
- Spread and adopt this work through engagement with other AHSNs in England.

Contact

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