National Campaign for Cardiac Rehabilitation

Fact sheet for campaigners in Wales

This fact sheet is designed to be used by campaigners when talking to local health decision makers or politicians in Wales. We need as many campaigners as possible to encourage decision makers to secure improved resources for cardiac rehabilitation.

The national campaign has five aims:
✓ Access to cardiac rehabilitation for all suitable heart patients
✓ Patients should be offered a choice of alternative methods
✓ Address cardiac rehabilitation needs of under-represented groups
✓ Each programme should meet minimum standards
✓ Monitor through national audit

When talking to decision makers, it’s important to bring these campaign aims to life and make them relevant at the local level.

1) Access to cardiac rehabilitation for all suitable heart patients
Latest figures show that 59% of the heart patients in Wales who need cardiac rehabilitation do not have access. This is worse than the situation in England.

2) Patients should be offered a choice of alternative methods
Patients should be offered alternative methods, such as home-based rehabilitation – not every heart patient is going to want to attend a hospital based cardiac rehabilitation programme, others will get more out of a community or home-based session. How many genuine choices will a heart patient in your town have?

3) Address cardiac rehabilitation needs of under-represented groups
Rehabilitation programmes fail to meet the needs of under-represented groups – two groups that are underrepresented in cardiac rehabilitation programmes are women and ethnic minorities. Are there any programmes in your area that specifically cater for underrepresented groups, e.g. is written material available in different languages?

4) Each programme should meet minimum BACR standards
This is important because some areas are simply handing out leaflets on healthy eating and physical activity and calling it cardiac rehabilitation! Many heart patients tell us that the biggest benefit they get from attending cardiac rehabilitation is the feeling they are not alone and that they can look forward to an active, fulfilling life.

5) Monitoring through the National Audit of Cardiac Rehabilitation
This audit is crucial to improving cardiac rehabilitation services because it is the best way to assess and improve quality. For your local campaigning you should find out whether your local cardiac rehabilitation programme is part of the national audit by checking the enclosed data sheet. If it isn’t you should find out why.
Here are some further general facts for campaigners to use

Wales specific
- It is clear that not enough people are being offered cardiac rehabilitation in Wales
- In 2005/6 only 41% of those in need of cardiac rehabilitation in Wales received it
- This is worse than in England, where 46% of patients benefited over the period
- In 2005/6, only 2,195 of 5,331 patients eligible for cardiac rehabilitation attended a course in Wales
- No targets have been set for uptake of cardiac rehabilitation in Wales
- Welsh cardiac rehabilitation services are threatened because funding is precarious. Funding is set by local health boards in Wales, and each local cardiac rehabilitation service has to compete for priority within that area.

General
- Cardiac rehab is one of the most effective treatments available to heart patients
- People who don't have cardiac rehab are 25% more likely to die in 2-5 years
- Cardiac rehab can improve lifestyle, reduce hospital admissions, improve quality of life, and reduce blood pressure, cholesterol, anxiety and depression.

Poor access
- There are 360 rehabilitation programmes on the official register in the UK. Together, at best, they treated about 40 per cent of patients in 2005–06 who had a heart attack, angioplasty or bypass surgery.
- This is far short of the 200,000 or so new patients every year found to have coronary heart disease who would benefit if they were able to take part.
- Very few patients with angina, heart failure, implanted cardiac devices, some arrhythmias or congenital heart disease are offered help.

Economic
- Cardiac rehab reduces costs through less need for more tests/investigations
- The average cost per patient for cardiac rehabilitation in the UK in 2005–06 was £413. Independent researchers have worked out that to meet the basic standard in clinical guidelines the cost per patient should be about £550.
  - a single day in a coronary care unit costs £1,400
  - an angioplasty (which does not reduce death rates) costs £3,000
  - bypass surgery costs in the region of £8,000.

Self care
- Cardiac rehab teaches people how to manage their condition, reducing their dependence on health services.
- Heart patients who are left unsure, anxious and depressed have many more tests and investigations than those who are not.
- The Welsh Assembly Government wants to move to a ‘patient led’ health service. ‘Listening exercises’ with groups of heart patients have shown that cardiac rehab has always emerged as a patient priority.

For further details on the campaign, please visit bhf.org.uk/campaigns and access the pages on cardiac rehabilitation, or email campaigns@bhf.org.uk