

Heart Rhythm Procedures Double Since New Guidelines Introduced.

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The UK's leading heart rhythm charity, Arrhythmia Alliance, says recently released NHS information for inpatient admissions shows that electrophysiology (heart rhythm) procedures have doubled since the introduction of guidelines of arrhythmia care were published in the UK.

The national guidelines formed Chapter 8 of the National Service Framework on Coronary Heart Disease and were introduced after a campaign by patients' groups to improve the diagnosis, treatment and care of people with arrhythmias. The Arrhythmia Alliance charity was officially launched in 2004, to help ensure the changes were properly integrated into the NHS.

NHS statistics for 2003-04 year showed that there were just 9,485 episodes of admitted adult patient care. In the latest figures for 2008-09, the same category shows 19,119 admissions for adults, double that of before the guidelines were introduced.

Arrhythmia Alliance believes that this two-fold increase is a direct result of better information, education and training that is now available, thanks to Chapter 8 of the NSF that the charity has been instrumental in bringing to fruition.

Since 2004, when the first Arrhythmia Awareness Week was held, there are now more than one hundred cardiac specialist nurses and awareness of heart rhythm conditions has been raised through the yearly Heart Rhythm Congress conferences, organised by Arrhythmia Alliance and attended by the world's leading arrhythmia specialists.

Founder of A-A, Trudie Lobban, said, "It's amazing to me that from our grass roots campaign five years ago, such a change has happened in heart rhythm care. The change in government health policy that followed the campaign is now showing real, statistical results in care for patients with all sorts of arrhythmia conditions that were previously little understood. A-A has been part of, and has helped lead, a collective effort by doctors, nurses, volunteers and patients to bring this about. Those people can now expect much better treatment within the NHS today."

Arrhythmia Alliance's current campaign is 'Know Your Pulse', which aims to bring changes within GP surgeries. The charity wants routine pulse checks to be carried out on patients visiting their family doctor as this is an easy and cost-effective way for many undiscovered heart rhythm problems to be detected.

Arrhythmia Alliance Medical Director and Trustee, Consultant Cardiologist, Dr Adam Fitzpatrick said, "An irregular pulse is an important sign of atrial fibrillation, (AF), an

Promoting better understanding, diagnosis, treatment and quality of life for individuals suffering with cardiac arrhythmia

arrhythmia affecting about 1m people in the UK. AF is closely associated with stroke, especially when other risk factors are present, such as diabetes. The annual risk of stroke can be as high as nearly 20%. AF can be cured by electrophysiology procedures, so that this big increase in numbers treated in the NHS gives patients hope that they will not have to live with this risk.”

Editor's Notes.

1. These figures can be found on the NHS' Hospital Statistics Episode's website at <http://www.hesonline.nhs.uk/Ease/servlet/ContentServer?siteID=1937&categoryID=206>.
2. Arrhythmia Alliance's website can be found at <http://www.heartrhythmcharity.org.uk>
3. The Arrhythmia Alliance office is on 01789 450787.
4. The website for sister charity, the Atrial Fibrillation Association, can be found at <http://www.atrialfibrillation.org.uk>