



Call for heart rhythm patients and doctors to talk more to prevent stroke or bleeding complications

- Survey suggests that, for people living with atrial fibrillation (AF), NICE guidelines need to be implemented more consistently*
- In the UK, AF affects around 1 in 10 people aged 65 years of age and over²*

(Uxbridge, Middlesex, Tuesday 4 June 2019) - People with a common heart rhythm condition, called atrial fibrillation (AF), should talk to their doctor about the long-term therapy they are being prescribed to prevent AF-related strokes.

A new survey suggests that, contrary to national guidelines, the majority (63%) of people with atrial fibrillation (AF) prescribed anticoagulants, a type of medication that helps prevent blood clots, were not given a choice of which anticoagulant they would receive.^{1,3} As many as 1 in 5 (20%) stated they were not made aware by their healthcare professional of their increased risk of an AF-related stroke, or steps they should take to help reduce their risk.¹

The survey of over 200 patients was conducted by the Bristol-Myers Squibb/Pfizer Collaboration and AF Turnaround, a partnership of leading medical experts and professional patient associations who are focused on preventing AF-related stroke by encouraging the adoption of national clinical guidelines for managing AF.^{1,4} The survey suggests that implementation of the guidelines can be further improved to ensure consistency regarding the aspect of patient involvement in decision making. Implementing the NICE Guidelines (CG180) may result in 10,000 fewer AF-related strokes per year, according to NHS estimates, through interventions such as increasing anticoagulation therapy which helps reduce the risk of blood clots, and by helping people with AF to better manage their condition.⁵

“One of the key recommendations introduced by NICE five years ago to involve patients in decision making to reduce their risk of an AF-related stroke may not be happening consistently. It is known that AF is a leading cause of stroke and that AF-related strokes can be more devastating and debilitating than any other type of stroke. 20% of strokes are due to AF and yet medication exists to prevent them – it is troubling that more is not being done,” said Trudie Lobban MBE, Founder & CEO of AF Association and Arrhythmia Alliance, Co-Chair of AF Turnaround.



Identifying and prescribing anticoagulation therapy to reduce the risk of AF-related stroke is a key priority area set out in the NHS' Long Term Plan.⁶ Launched in January 2019, the plan has a strong focus on improving prevention and detection of the risk factors associated with stroke as part of its ambitions to improve the quality of patient care and health outcomes for NHS users.⁶

“Educating patients about AF and involving them in decisions about their anticoagulant therapy should be a key priority area in how healthcare professionals deliver a personalised package of care in the current guidelines.⁴ Anyone with AF who has been prescribed anticoagulants should be having a conversation with their doctor about the anticoagulant therapy options available to them in order to help reduce their risk of an AF-related stroke or bleeding” said Eve Knight, Chief Executive and Co-founder of Anticoagulation UK and Co-Chair of AF Turnaround.

“Anticoagulants are effective at reducing the risk of an AF-related stroke, but it’s crucial that patients are properly assessed and supported in their decision as regards prevention of AF-related stroke,” said Dr Matt Fay, GP and member of the AF Turnaround Steering Committee. “It’s encouraging however that the survey showed that the vast majority of patients are being prescribed effective, preventative treatments to reduce their risk of having an AF-related stroke.”

Out of those who took part in the survey, 49% said they would like more involvement in the choice of anticoagulation therapy and 53% did not recall having any discussion with their healthcare professional about the choice of anticoagulants available to them.¹ The survey also found that, contrary to national guidelines,⁴ 1 in 6 (16%) people said that they had not had their anticoagulation therapy reviewed in the previous 12 months.¹

According to national guidelines on the care people living with AF should expect to receive, all anticoagulant drugs should be reviewed on a regular basis depending on the type of anticoagulation prescribed.^{2,4}

Ends



Notes to editors

About Atrial Fibrillation and AF-related stroke

Atrial fibrillation (AF) affects around 1.3 million adults in the UK.⁸ AF affects how blood flows through the heart, significantly increasing the risk of a blood clot and stroke.^{2, 8} Approximately 12,500 strokes per year are attributable to AF in the UK.²

About the survey

The 20-minute online survey was conducted by the BMS/Pfizer Collaboration and AF Turnaround between August and November 2018 and received responses from 206 patients with atrial fibrillation from across the UK. All respondents were receiving anticoagulation therapy, including warfarin or the non-vitamin K oral anticoagulants (NOACs) for their AF. The survey was conducted to understand if the national guideline outlining the care that people with AF should expect is being implemented in clinical practice.

About AF Turnaround

The AF Turnaround campaign brings together an expert Steering Committee of leading healthcare professionals and professional patient associations to support the prevention of AF-related stroke, by encouraging adoption of national clinical guidelines in AF ('NICE CG180'). The members of the Steering Committee are made up of healthcare professionals and representatives from professional patient associations in the UK. Professional patient associations representatives, and Co-Chairs of AF Turnaround:

- Trudie Lobban MBE (Chief Executive Officer and Founder, AF Association, and Founder and Trustee of the Arrhythmia Alliance)
- Eve Knight (Chief Executive and Co-founder, Anticoagulation UK)

Healthcare professionals:

- Dr David Collas (Specialist in Stroke Medicine at Watford General Hospital)
- Professor Martin Cowie (Imperial College London)
- Dr Matt Fay (GP Principal, The Willows Medical Practice, and Strategic Director, Westcliffe Group)
- Dr Dhiraj Ghupta (Consultant Cardiologist at Liverpool Heart and Chest Hospital)
- Shona Holding (Cardiovascular Specialist Nurse Practitioner, Westcliffe Medical Centre)
- Dr Jonathan Salter (GP at Knightwick Surgery in Worcestershire)



AF Turnaround was initiated and funded by an Alliance between Bristol-Myers Squibb Pharmaceuticals Ltd and Pfizer Ltd (the BMS-Pfizer Alliance), working in partnership with the AF Association, Anticoagulation UK and Arrhythmia Alliance.

About the Bristol-Myers Squibb/Pfizer Collaboration

In 2007, Pfizer and Bristol-Myers Squibb entered into a worldwide collaboration to develop and commercialize apixaban, an oral anticoagulant discovered by Bristol-Myers Squibb. This global alliance combines Bristol-Myers Squibb's long-standing strengths in cardiovascular drug development and commercialization with Pfizer's global scale and expertise in this field.

About Bristol-Myers Squibb

Bristol-Myers Squibb is a global biopharmaceutical company whose mission is to discover, develop and deliver innovative medicines that help patients prevail over serious diseases. For more information about Bristol-Myers Squibb, visit us at <https://www.bms.com/gb>

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