



## News Release

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# Report shows limited UK uptake of procedures to correct poorly hearts

**EMBARGOED UNTIL: 00:01 hours, Thursday 27 March 2015**

**27 March 2015, UK: AF Association, an international heart rhythm charity, is calling for better patient access to AF ablation procedures at ablation centres across the UK.**

The charity is responding to findings from this year's National Audit of Cardiac Rhythm Management (CRM) report 2013/14 on ablation for AF.

Atrial fibrillation (AF) is the most common heart rhythm disorder. It is characterised by an irregular heartbeat, and reduces the ability of the heart to pump blood effectively around the body.

Symptoms of the condition include feeling faint, palpitations and shortness of breath, although up to half of those living with the condition are thought to be asymptomatic. At the age of 40 we each have a one in four lifetime risk of developing the condition, which carries a 500% increased risk of stroke.

The 9<sup>th</sup> annual report, issued today as part of the National Audit of Cardiac Rhythm Management, focuses on the numbers of ablation procedures performed at hospitals across the UK. Ablations for AF are normally performed by a cardiologist who specialises in the treatment of heart rhythm disorders, referred to as an Electrophysiologist (EP). The procedure involves an EP accessing heart muscle, either via catheter or surgically, to destroy or isolate the abnormal sources of electrical impulses that might be driving AF and reinstate sinus (normal) rhythm, thus restoring a patient's quality of life. Data from more than 60 centres across the UK has been collected and fed into the report.

When analysing trends documented in the report, it is evident that since increasing rapidly in the late 2000's, the total number of ablation procedures performed across the UK has plateaued during



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the period 2010-2014. This is thought to indicate that current ablation centres are working to capacity.

Jason Thornton, 43, an AF patient from Yorkshire, underwent an ablation procedure last month. Speaking ahead of the release of the report he said: "Although I had just one AF episode in the month before my ablation, my clinicians were very keen that I should have the procedure, not least so I could carry on in life taking less medication to control my heart rhythm.

"I waited three months for my ablation; some people can be on the waiting list for a year or even more. The procedure is an absolute lifeline for people with persistent AF who might need to make regular trips to hospital to have their heart rate returned to normal."

Trudie Lobban MBE, AF Association Founder and CEO said: "Ablation for AF is often effective in restoring quality of life.

"When ablation for AF happens early, research has shown it is more effective and patients can go on to live a normal life without AF. I would like to see more people recommended for this procedure.

"As a patient, your likelihood to be recommended or be put on a waiting list for an ablation procedure should not be dictated by your postcode; something this report highlights is still sadly a concern."

**-Ends-**

### Notes:

- 1) AF Association is an international charity that provides support, information and guidance to anyone affected by atrial fibrillation. It works in partnership with patients and clinical experts to advance the education of both the medical profession and the general public on the risks, detection and treatment of AF.
- 2) For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact Andrew Robson on 01789 867 527 or email [andrew@heartrhythmalliance.org](mailto:andrew@heartrhythmalliance.org)



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- 3) The AF Association website can be found at [www.afa.org.uk](http://www.afa.org.uk)
- 4) The report can be downloaded in full at <http://bhhs.com/audit>