



**INNOVATION AGENCY**  
Academic Health Science Network  
for the North West Coast

# ATRIAL FIBRILLATION COLLABORATIVE

## Summary

The Innovation Agency created a North West Coast Atrial Fibrillation (AF) Collaborative to enable GPs to better identify patients with AF and improve management of the condition.

To date, the Collaborative has involved 71 GP practices in the CCG areas of Warrington, East Lancashire, Blackburn with Darwen, West Cheshire and Wirral.

The Collaborative has facilitated the delivery of AF educational sessions and materials, the distribution of KardiaMobile ECG devices and Quality Improvement (QI) training and support in developing and implementing practice improvement plans.

## Why is this important?

Atrial fibrillation is a condition which is under diagnosed and under treated in the North West Coast. We estimate that in our region there are over 20,000 people who have the condition but are not diagnosed. Of those who are identified, as many as 40 per cent may not be managed according to NICE guidelines.

Subsequently, we have some of the highest AF-related stroke rates in the country – many of which could be avoided.



Dr Alena Machell tests a patient for AF

## The challenge

The challenge is to help primary care teams to find these 'missing' people with AF and to better manage those who have been identified. We have worked with 71 practices to date across five CCGs. Across these practices, there are estimated to be around 2,500 people missing from AF registers and a further 1,613 high risk AF patients who are not adequately anticoagulated.

## Actions taken

The Collaborative has been working with practice improvement teams to improve care for people with AF by providing:

- AF clinical staff training
- KardiaMobile ECG devices for opportunistic testing
- AF step-by-step guides
- QI training and assistance with developing an AF improvement plan
- Support for AF case finding on GP systems
- Access to and training on an online QI platform to plan, track and record improvements

## Our other AF work

The Innovation Agency is improving the management of AF and preventing strokes through a number of other initiatives, including:

- Genotype guided warfarin dosing
- Supplying portable ECG devices to organisations including Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service and housing associations for pulse testing residents
- Providing AF patients in East Lancashire with home monitoring technology to carry out blood tests and send results via an app to health professionals
- Recruiting and training volunteer AF Ambassadors who check pulses using portable devices, in workplaces and health and community sites

## Improvements in practices

Improvements in practices include:

- Increasing the numbers of appropriate patients on anticoagulation therapy
- Ensuring that appropriate high risk AF patients are on anticoagulation therapy
- Developing an opportunistic testing protocol for AF using the Kardia devices
- Reviewing the care of people on anticoagulation therapy and putting new pathways in place to ensure patient safety
- Checking that all AF patients have a yearly review, whether they are low or high risk, or have been exception reported
- Providing patient information materials

To date, 868 of the previously 'missing' patients have been added to practice registers & 1,043 additional patients are now prescribed a form of anticoagulation therapy. This will prevent an estimated 41 strokes each year.

## Testimonials

"We had a Care Quality Commission inspection four weeks ago - they loved our AF quality improvement work which ticked lots of boxes on their report! I'm keen to replicate it for other chronic diseases." - Dr Jennifer Bright, Birchwood Medical Practice.

## Plans for the future

The Collaborative is an ongoing project & this case study provides a summary of work up to June 2018. The next phase will involve a further 50 practices in four other CCGs in the North West Coast area.

June 2018

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