

News Release

The Hidden Heart Problem

YouGov survey reveals low awareness of potentially fatal heart condition that affects significant number of people in UK

LONDON, UK; [insert date and time]: As many as 700,000 people in the UK suffer from a heart abnormality called arrhythmia, a potentially fatal condition, which the majority of Londoners have never heard of - according to a recent survey conducted by YouGov¹. Many of the deaths associated with arrhythmias could be prevented due to advances in the identification and treatment of high risk patients. The survey highlights that 75% of the public are also unaware that arrhythmia can greatly increase the risk of stroke and heart attack.²

The YouGov survey showed that many people are more concerned about cancer and mental health compared with heart disease, even though this can also be fatal if not diagnosed and treated in time.¹ More than half (55%) of those surveyed have never had a simple ECG examination and so remain unaware of the general health of their hearts.¹

Arrhythmia is an umbrella term for a range of heart conditions where the heart beats abnormally.^{3,3} The effects of arrhythmias vary in severity from person to person, but typically include palpitations that can have a major impact on quality of life.³ Although a fairly common heart complaint, the symptoms of arrhythmia are often transient, making diagnosis difficult, despite it being one of the top ten causes of hospital attendance in the UK.⁴ In some cases there is no known cause of an arrhythmia however drinking, smoking, high blood pressure and stress are all believed to play a role, whilst for some people, a genetic factor is involved.⁵

Three private London hospitals have formed the London Arrhythmia Network⁶ to promote public awareness of arrhythmias and reinforce the importance of monitoring heart health. London Bridge Hospital, The Harley Street Clinic and The Wellington Hospital are home to leading consultant cardiologists who specialise in diagnosing and treating arrhythmias using the very latest surgical technology.^{3,4,7}

Traditionally, arrhythmias were treated with medication which did not cure the condition and for many patients resulted in unpleasant side-effects such as tiredness and lethargy and can be potentially dangerous if used inexpertly. However, recent developments in surgical techniques have now led to a minor keyhole surgical procedure that can provide a cure in some groups of patients that fail to respond to other treatments.

Treatments for arrhythmias depend on the type and severity but catheter ablation is considered a first line treatment for some types of arrhythmia and can be a trouble-free cure for patients who have not responded to alternative therapy. Other treatments include pacemakers, implantable cardioverter defibrillators or cardioversion and cardiac resynchronisation therapy, which all help in restoring the normal rhythm of the heart and can greatly increase patients' chances of long term survival.^{2,3,7}

'This survey demonstrates that awareness of arrhythmia is worryingly low, despite the potential for serious harm that is associated with the condition. It is important to keep the heart healthy through lifestyle choices and look out for any warning signs such as changes in heart rhythm, shortness of breath or chest pains. If anyone experiences these symptoms, they should seek the advice of their healthcare professional immediately.' Dr John Foran, Consultant Cardiac Electrophysiologist, The Harley Street Clinic

Notes to Editors

For further information on arrhythmia or to interview a number of patients or leading consultants, please contact:

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Catheter Ablation

Catheter ablation is a minor keyhole surgical procedure that can provide a cure for some types of arrhythmias where patients have not responded to other treatments. With a success rate in excess of 90% for many arrhythmias treated with this procedure and a very low risk of complications, patients often make a full recovery within just a few days. The specialist consultants from the London Arrhythmia Network provide the full range of heart health check services and routinely perform catheter ablation procedures. For more information, visit www.londonarrhythmianetwork.co.uk

The London Arrhythmia Network consists of London Bridge Hospital, The Harley Street Clinic and The Wellington Hospital which are owned by private hospital group, HCA International. Each hospital is a recognised Centre of Excellence for cardiology and home to leading consultants specialising in diagnosing and treating arrhythmia patients. Commitment to surgical quality, patient care and the latest technology has virtually eliminated hospital-acquired infections, such as MRSA, making the London Arrhythmia Network the ideal choice for patients and doctors.

Further information can be found at www.londonarrhythmianetwork.co.uk

HCA

HCA have six world-class hospitals and four outpatient medical centres in London, and are the private hospitals of choice for the successful treatment of serious and complex medical conditions. HCA have achieved some of the highest patient outcome and survival rates in the UK and the hospitals are virtually MRSA-free. They have internationally recognised Centres of Excellence for cardiac care, neurology (brain and spine injuries), women's health, IVF and fertility. HCA buy the very latest equipment, drugs and therapies to ensure that patients always have access to the best possible treatment that is available anywhere.

YouGov Survey

The Arrhythmia Awareness Survey was conducted by YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 1125. Fieldwork was undertaken between 9th - 11th March 2009. The survey was carried out online and the figures have been weighted and are representative of all London adults (aged 18+).

References

¹ YouGov Survey, 1,125 London adults aged 18+. Fieldwork 11th – 13th March 2009'

² Department of Health. National Services Framework for Coronary Heart Disease. Chapter Eight: Arrhythmias and Sudden Cardiac Death. March 2005

³ London Bridge Hospital Website. Available at www.londonarrhythmiacentre.co.uk

⁴ The Wellington Hospital Website. Available at www.thewellingtoncardiacservices.com

⁵ National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute Website. Available at http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci/Diseases/arr/arr_causes.html

⁶ The London Arrhythmia Network Website. Available at www.londonarrhythmianetwork.co.uk

⁷ The Harley Street Clinic Website. Available at <http://www.theharleystreetclinic.com/Cardiac>