

Local Health Bulletin: Working together for better healthcare

This Bulletin is a collaboration between local GPs and the Oxford Academic Health Science Network (hosted by Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and funded by NHS England and local partners).

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How is Your Heart? Irregular Heartbeat?

Atrial Fibrillation (AF) is the most common irregular heartbeat. Around 1.5 million people in England live with AF and it is estimated that one third of these don't know they have it. Strokes caused by AF tend to be more severe with greater disability and higher death rates.

AF is a manageable condition and anticoagulation therapy such as warfarin and novel anticoagulants (NOACs) greatly reduces the risk of a stroke. However, many patients are still taking anti-platelet agents such as aspirin despite guidance to the contrary from The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE).

If you have AF and are taking aspirin, please talk to your GP about whether it is appropriate for a review of your medication.

For more information about AF please turn over



Early Inflammatory Arthritis

Inflammatory arthritis primarily affects the joints. Any joint can be affected although the small joints in the hands and feet are often the first to be noticed.

Diagnosing rheumatoid arthritis early is particularly important because further damage to the joints can be stopped.

There are a number of conditions that can cause problems such as joint pain and stiffness, so it's important to get a proper diagnosis.

Symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis include pain, stiffness, swelling, warmth and redness.

Joints are typically affected symmet-rically (both sides of the body at the same time and to the same extent), but this is not always so.



Tell us what you think?

Please help us by giving us your views on the usefulness of this information.

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/P6HWNYL>

Antibiotic Prescribing for Children

Antibiotics are the most common medicine given to children, with around 6m prescriptions in the UK a year. There is evidence that resistance to antibiotics is linked to how and what is prescribed. Antibiotics do not work with viral infections, only with bacterial infections.

A panel of patients and health professionals has now revised the guidelines for prescribing antibiotics so that all prescribe in the same way for each of the common childhood conditions. They have also agreed an alternative approach for children with an allergy to antibiotics.

This common approach is intended to minimise the growth of antibiotic resistance in the community, and to ensure that medicines can continue to be effective in the future.

GPs, pharmacists, microbiologists and paediatricians within our region will be working to these revised guidelines. As a result you may find that your prescription has changed.

Oxford Academic Health Science Network

The Oxford Academic Health Science Network for Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Milton Keynes and Bedfordshire works to improve healthcare, and promote research participation across the region.

Arthritis, Atrial Fibrillation and antibiotic prescribing are three examples of the Oxford AHSN's collaborative work in your region.

For more information go to <http://www.oxfordahsn.org>

Additional Information about AF

Across Oxford and the Thames Valley around 65,000 patients are estimated to have AF but only around 48,000 are recorded as having the condition. This suggests there is an opportunity, through screening, for many more patients to have AF diagnosed and appropriately treated. Between October 2014 and September 2015, 637 patients in our region who had been previously diagnosed with AF had a stroke. Only 46% of these were receiving anticoagulants.

Furthermore, a survey of 229 patients with documented chronic AF found:

- 37% were unaware of AF as primary diagnosis
- 37% were unaware that AF causes clots
- 47% were unaware that AF leads to stroke
- 48% were unaware of the reason for warfarin

Find out more on the NHS choices website www.nhs.uk/pages/home or via the AF association www.atrialfibrillation.org.uk



Get involved as a patient and/or a public representative

Involvement as a patient can mean:

- having a voice with your own healthcare
- being a patient voice in the development and delivery of services

Involvement in your own social care and/or healthcare

This might be managing your own care, sharing decision-making and personal care planning, and/or discussing options about your health.

Being a patient voice

At its simplest and quickest involvement can be giving feedback in a survey eg the Friends and Family Test, but can also include volunteering in a clinical research trial, fundraising for a specific piece of equipment, acting as a Foundation Trust Governor, being an active member of a Patient Participation Group or being a volunteer guide.

To find out more about how you could be involved go to:

www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/patients/public-voice/

The 2016 Leading Together Programme

This programme is an opportunity to create real change in our healthcare system with lay people and professionals working together co-designing services that are truly accessible for everyone and meet the needs of their community.

To find out more please contact leadingtogether@oxfordahsn.org

NHS Self Care

The NHS self-help guide gives information and advice on some of the more common symptoms that people ask about.

Have a look and you may find answers to your questions without having to consult a health professional.

You can search alphabetically (like in a dictionary), or by body area using the body map.

<http://www.nhs24.com/selfhelpguide/>

Additional Information about Arthritis

Symptoms to look for:

- **Pain**, usually a throbbing and aching pain, often worse in the mornings and after a period of inactivity.
- **Stiffness** in the joints affected, often more severe in the morning or after a period of inactivity and not wearing off like that usually felt with osteoarthritis.
- **Swelling, warmth and redness** due to inflammation which can cause the joints to swell, and become hot and tender to touch.
- As well as problems affecting the joints, some people with inflammatory arthritis experience a range of more general symptoms, such as tiredness and a lack of energy, a high temperature (fever), sweating, a poor appetite, weight loss.

Consult your GP if you think you have symptoms of inflammatory arthritis.