

Diabetes Podiatry & Atrial Fibrillation

Save a Life, Stop a Stroke



Cost of a stroke is

£23,315

(including inpatient,
post discharge,
rehabilitation and
long term care
costs)

(NAO, 2010)



If **6800** patients
were correctly anticoagulated



340
strokes could be prevented



as well as saving the NHS

£7.9M



**Diabetes
DOUBLES
the risk
of a stroke**

(Source: The Stroke
Association quoting The
Lancet and SSNAP)

A three-month pilot foot pulse-checking project aimed at increasing the diagnosis of Atrial Fibrillation (AF) identified a number of patients with previously undiagnosed AF. The work was conducted by County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust and has been part of a wider AF Programme run by the Academic Health Science Network for the North East and North Cumbria (AHSN NENC) in conjunction with the Northern England Clinical Networks. It aims to reduce the number of strokes and deaths in the region by treating AF as early as possible.

A report following the Podiatry and Atrial Fibrillation Case Finding scheme, revealed that the NHS in the North East North Cumbria area could benefit from potential cost savings in excess of £500,000. During the initiative, 45 podiatrists from across North Durham, Darlington and Durham Dales Easington and Sedgfield CCGs were trained to spot heart irregularities when taking pulse readings of diabetic patients' feet during their annual foot screening appointments. This means more podiatrists from the region are now upskilled in this potentially life-saving check. Over the course of the three-month pilot 5,000 diabetic patients had their feet pulse-tested across the North East. The project uncovered that for every 500 patients who had their feet checked, one new case of AF could be identified.

The podiatrists have been very receptive to the programme and recognise it as their clinical responsibility to help detect AF. The pilot has been an excellent opportunity to raise awareness of the condition amongst patients and healthcare professionals alike and training continues to be rolled out through County Durham and Darlington and the Northern Diabetes Footcare Network. Heart problems are two to three times more common in people with diabetes; so any simple process that picks up a potential problem quickly can save lives.

Dr Rahul Nayar, Chair of the Northern Diabetes Footcare Network, Diabetes Clinical Lead for Northern England Clinical Networks, NHSE & Consultant Diabetologist at City Hospitals, Sunderland

Kate Mackay, AF Programme Lead, AHSN NENC

Linda Hicks, Advanced Podiatrist, Podiatry Department, County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust

Pilot work showed that for every 500 people having their annual foot check

1 NEW CASE
of AF was detected



AF is a common heart condition causing an irregular heart rate. It affects around one million people in the UK with a further 474,000 estimated to be living with undiagnosed AF. Almost one in ten people aged over 65 are affected by the condition which commonly displays no symptoms. Without treatment those living with AF are at increased risk of suffering a stroke costing the NHS on average £23,315 per patient.

Diabetes is a common condition affecting 3.4M people across England. Patients with diabetes have their pulse checked as part of their annual foot check review. And all patients aged 12 and over should be offered a foot check. It is important to detect the presence or absence of a foot pulse to prevent diabetes complications.

There is currently no national screening programme for pulse checking. Currently, any person detected with an irregular pulse, through whatever means, is usually referred from their GP for a 12-lead ECG to confirm diagnosis.



CALL TO ACTION

‘Save a Life, Stop a Stroke’

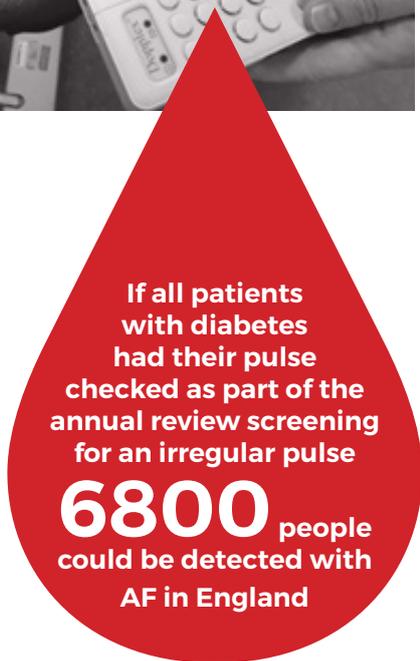
Diabetes podiatrists and footcare technicians are well placed to check foot pulse rhythm.

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO?

- Train podiatrists and foot care technicians to feel for pulse regularity.
- Ensure a pathway is in place allowing podiatrists or footcare technicians to refer a diabetes patient to their GP for further investigations, usually a 12-lead ECG.

TRAINING TOP TIPS

1. Ensure you listen to the pulses with the Doppler for at least 30 seconds.
2. It is important to listen to the quality and regularity of the pulse, you will need the patient to be still & quiet.
3. Communication - if an irregular pulse is identified explain clearly to the patient why you are referring them to their GP & that they will require further tests.



“Having recently been diagnosed with Type2 Diabetes, I had an appointment with Dr.Waller last week. On my way out, the receptionist asked if I'd made an appointment to see the podiatrist. As she was in the surgery that morning, an appointment was made, and I was asked to come back at 11.00am. Upon checking the pulses in my feet with ultrasound, she asked if I was aware that I had an unstable heartbeat. She explained in-depth what was happening with my heartbeat, the symptoms and the risks. She immediately contacted the practice nurse, who checked me on an ECG machine, then I returned to see Dr.Waller, who explained things to me again, and discussed the various forms of treatment. I am now being prescribed warfarin tablets and I'm being monitored by the anticoagulant clinic. I would like to thank all concerned for the prompt and thorough diagnosis and treatment. You are all a credit to the practice, and the NHS service.” **Mr P. Teasdale, Patient**

RESOURCE LINKS

ACE

www.anticoagulationuk.org

Diabetes UK

www.diabetes.org.uk/guide-to-diabetes/complications/feet

Order your free 'How to Spot a Foot Attack' resource online at

<https://shop.diabetes.org.uk/store/managing-your-diabetes/information/putting-feet-first/how-to-spot-a-foot-attack.aspx>

For more information on the AHSN NENC's AF programme visit

www.ahsn-nenc.org.uk/programmes/atrial-fibrillation

For more information on the Northern England Clinical Network's Diabetes programme visit

www.necn.nhs.uk/networks/diabetes/network-groups/diabetic-footcare/



Almost **1 in 10**
people aged over 65 are
affected by AF.



There are
474,000
people with undiagnosed
AF in England (Source: PHE)

1 in 20
patients with untreated
AF will have a stroke
(Source: The Stroke Association
quoting Annals of Medicine)



There are **3.4M**
people living with
diabetes in England
(Source: The Stroke Association
quoting HSCIC)