

# The AAA Team

Newsletter of the Northern Ireland AAA Screening Programme



Issue 10: Produced by the NI AAA Screening Programme for HSC Professionals - Spring 2015

## The Role of Primary Care Health Professionals regarding Self-referrals

The Northern Ireland Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm (AAA) Screening Programme has been examining the ability of primary care health professionals to influence the number of men self-referring to the programme. This initial piece of work looks at all men who have self-referred since the programme started in June 2012 until February 2015. Two specific strands have been explored so far:

- how the men initially heard of the programme; and
- the number of men, by GP practice, who had self-referred.

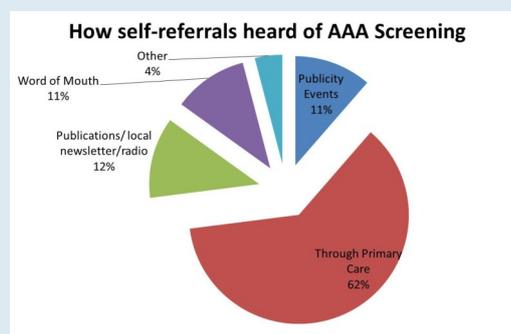
By February 2015, 1,167 men had self-referred, representing over 5% of all screening attendances. From the data we can see that over 60% of self-referrals came directly as a result of interventions by primary care professionals; usually promotion of the programme to eligible men by their GP.

The data also show that 79% of GP practices across Northern Ireland had at least one man registered with them who had self-referred to the programme. However, most GPs only have small numbers of men self-referring, i.e. fewer than 10 men. Only 1% of GP practices had a significant number of self-referrals, i.e. more than 20 men. These practices had made direct contact with eligible men, writing to them to advise them about the programme.

These outcomes, although still at an early stage of systematic AAA screening in Northern Ireland, confirm the ability of the primary care health professional to significantly influence self-referral numbers.

The Programme was recently invited to share this preliminary work at national level at a highly successful AAA research and audit event hosted by the English NHS AAA Screening Programme in Manchester. Diane Stewart, NI AAA Screening Programme Manager, delivered a presentation, which was one of a number selected by the event organisers. Participants learned that, since the programme has not been able to run a mass media campaign, it has consequently looked at other ways of encouraging eligible men to self-refer.

The meeting, which was attended by 120 delegates including service users, programme providers and commissioners, also showcased several examples of local programme audit that highlighted the link between social deprivation, higher incidence of disease and lower uptake of screening. The day culminated in a presentation from two Swedish Professors of surgery, Anders Wanhainen and Martin Björck, who explained how Sweden's AAA Screening Programme had been inspired by the English experience. As in the UK, the prevalence of aneurysms in older men has been declining in Sweden in recent years while smoking, high blood pressure and family history are consistent risk factors for the disease in both countries. More information on this event can be found in the NSC Newsletter Issue 20 at: [www.screening.nhs.uk/screeningmatters](http://www.screening.nhs.uk/screeningmatters)



<u>No. of Self-Referrals</u>	<u>No. of GPs</u>
5 or less self-referrals	225
6-10 self-referrals	40
11-15 self referrals	8
16+ self-referrals	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>279</b>

### 2014 / 2015 Data

Screen detected AAAs: 108

Large AAAs referred for surgery: 7

The screening year runs from 1/4/2014 to 31/3/2015. All men in Northern Ireland who turn 65 during this time will have been offered an initial screening appointment by the end of March 2015 (9,480 men). To date, 571 men who have self-referred during this same period have been screened.

### Overall Data as at 30 March 2015

(since programme started in June 2012)

Uptake rate: 82%

Screen detected AAAs: 364

Large AAAs referred for surgery: 48

Total self-referrals: 1,333

Overall prevalence rate: 1.5%.

## New Service User Videos and Audio Versions of Screening Leaflets

The programme has produced two new videos for service users which can be viewed at our website ([www.aaascreening.info](http://www.aaascreening.info)). The first video features a welcome and introduction to the AAA Screening Programme within Northern Ireland from Mr Paul Blair, Consultant Vascular Surgeon and Clinical Lead for the NI AAA screening programme. The second video outlines the screening experience of Mr John McElkearney who was diagnosed with a small AAA. Each video lasts several minutes and preparations are under way for two further videos featuring the screening experiences of gentlemen who have been diagnosed with a medium and large AAA.



Mr John McElkearney features on the programme's first service user video for men diagnosed with a small AAA.

## Audio Versions of General Information and Results Leaflets

### Abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) screening



Things you need to know

HSC Public Health Agency AAA Screening

A quick, free scan for men aged 65

Audio versions of the programme's general information leaflet (entitled Things You Need to Know) and its three results leaflets for small, medium and large AAAs are now available on our website at [www.aaascreening.info](http://www.aaascreening.info). These can be accessed as follows:

- Visiting [www.aaascreening.info](http://www.aaascreening.info)
- Clicking on the Publications tab at the top of the Home page
- Clicking on Audio Transcripts
- Pressing Play (although the recording may start playing automatically)

## Programme Team Success

In our last issue we reported on the success of the Screening Programme Team with regard to being short-listed for two Allied Healthcare Professional awards within Northern Ireland in late 2014. We are now delighted to report that the programme's Lead Sonographer, Mrs Deirdre Kearns (pictured right), was announced as the winner of the **AHP Manager of the Year Award 2014** as part of the **Institute of Healthcare Management Awards**. In accepting her reward, Deirdre was keen to thank her AAA screening colleagues acknowledging that, while she was delighted to be recognised personally, the award very much represented the hard work of the NIAAASP team in helping to make AAA screening within Northern Ireland a success.



**Calling all GPs! Don't forget SELF-REFERRAL...**

Men over 65, who have never attended for AAA Screening, can ask to be screened by contacting the Programme Office on: **02890 631828**

## How Primary Care Supports the NI AAA Screening Programme

Primary care has continued to contribute to the success of the AAA Screening Programme since its inception in 2012. Your considerable contribution and partnership working is invaluable, particularly in the areas outlined below.

### Supporting men with a screen-detected AAA

When an **aneurysm is detected**, the programme informs the man's GP practice by telephone on the same day; this is followed up in writing. GPs are then asked to:

- arrange to take measurements for height, weight, BMI and blood pressure; and
- consider commencing the man on anti-platelet and statin therapy (unless contra-indicated).

For **men with a large AAA**, GPs are also asked to:

- make a standard referral to the Vascular Team for further intervention / treatment; and
- arrange an urgent blood test (U&E) if required.

GPs are similarly the key providers of aftercare for men who have undergone surgical repair.

### Promotion of the Programme

It is recognised that people often rely on the advice of the primary care teams when making health decisions. It is therefore important that these teams are well informed about the programme and can discuss the benefits and harms of AAA screening to enable eligible men to make an informed choice. GPs are informed when a man does not attend a screening appointment. Following this, **some practices have:**

- Identified men who do not attend and talk to them opportunistically about screening.
- Proactively contacted men who do not attend to discuss screening.
- Been actively promoting the programme to those over 65 and eligible to self-refer. (In January 2014, one GP practice sent information to all men registered with their surgery who were over 65. This generated over 90 self-referrals from that practice alone.)
- Displayed information about the programme in waiting areas, etc. (Many men who call the programme to self-refer do so after being advised of the programme by their GP / Pharmacist or after seeing a poster in their waiting area.)
- Recommended screening to eligible men who have a strong family history of AAAs.

The programme is hoping to build on the success of this kind of promotion by working with other GP practices across Northern Ireland.

### Providing information to facilitate screening appointments for eligible men

The programme continually liaises with primary care on a range of issues such as:

- Ensuring patient records are accurate (information is downloaded into the programme's IT system on eligible men registered with GPs).
- Liaising with practices on any patient record discrepancies.
- Seeking information about particular needs of men coming for screening, e.g. a physical or sensory disability, limited mobility or a learning disability (as this helps facilitate the screening appointment and allows appropriate arrangements to be made, e.g. extra time for the appointment if required).
- Organising an appropriate interpreter or signer when required to support a gentleman at an appointment.

### Healthcare Professionals newsletter

The Screening Programme continues to produce a newsletter several times per year aimed at healthcare professionals. This is an important vehicle for the programme to continue to engage with primary care teams.



## AAA Screening Service User Event 2015

On Thursday 30 April this year the AAA Screening programme will host its third, annual Service User Event in Knockbracken Hall, Knockbracken Healthcare Park from 9.30am-1pm. The 2014 event saw twice as many service users attend as in 2013. The main aims of the event are to:

- Bring together men screen-detected over the last year with an AAA (along with their wives/partners) to share their experience of the programme with other service users and the programme team.
- Receive feedback from all participants at the event as to how the screening service may be further developed and improved.

Evaluation of the 2013 and 2014 events has highlighted how much all participants value the opportunity to meet and share their experience of the screening programme while considering ways it might be improved.

This year, we are particularly keen to hear from gentlemen under surveillance as well as those referred for surgery. We also hope to hear from Primary Care representatives on their experience of supporting men screen diagnosed with AAA. If you are interested in attending this event, even if for only part of the morning, please see the attached flyer and/or contact Helen McCann at [helen.mccann@hscni.net](mailto:helen.mccann@hscni.net) / 02890 311611.



Mrs Margaret Campbell, and Mr Leonard Campbell who attended the Service User Event in 2014 with Mrs Jacqueline McDevitt

## Management of Individuals with a Family History of AAAs

The AAA Screening Programme targets men aged 65 and over because 95 per cent of ruptured abdominal aortic aneurysms occur in this group. However, the risk of developing an AAA also increases through close family history.

Both men and women who have a near relative - brother, sister or parent - who has, or has had, an AAA can receive an ultrasound scan at an appropriate age under existing NHS procedures and are advised to speak to their GP to discuss a referral. Individuals with a family history of AAA are advised to consider requesting a scan at an age five years younger than the age at which their brother, sister or parent was diagnosed. Close relatives of men with an AAA are encouraged to take the usual health precautions of not smoking, having a cholesterol and blood pressure check and staying healthy. Further guidance with regard to the management of individuals with a family history of AAAs can be found on the Programme website at: [www.aaascreening.info/frequently-asked-questions](http://www.aaascreening.info/frequently-asked-questions).

### **Key contacts: Belfast H&SC Trust**

**Programme Mgr:** Ms Diane Stewart, 02890 638256  
**Programme Office:** 02890 631828

### **Key contacts: PHA**

**QA Manager:** Mrs Jacqueline McDevitt, 02890 311611  
**Admin Asst:** Ms Helen McCann, 02890 311611

## Existing Information Sources for GPs

Information on the NI AAA Screening Programme is available in the following formats via the website or by contacting **Helen McCann** directly on **02890 311611** or e-mailing [helen.mccann@hscni.net](mailto:helen.mccann@hscni.net)

**GP Information Pack** | **GP Awareness Presentations** | **Promotional Materials** | **Copies or E copies of our newsletter 'The AAA Team'** | **Screening Invite leaflet 'AAA Screening : Things you need to know'** | **Leaflets for men under surveillance for small, medium or large AAAs**