

The AAA Team

Newsletter of the Northern Ireland AAA Screening Programme



Issue 4 Produced by the NI AAA Screening Programme for Health Care Professionals WINTER 2012/13

New Phase for NI AAA Screening Programme

Following the successful implementation and roll-out of the NI AAA Screening Programme (NIAAASP) during June/July 2012, the programme is now entering a new phase of consolidation and development of the existing service. Specifically, the Public Health Agency (PHA), which was the lead organisation for implementing the programme, will now be responsible for ongoing commissioning and external quality assurance of the NIAAASP. In addition to establishing a quality assurance structure and function for the programme, the PHA will also develop and facilitate audit and research activities related to the programme. More detailed information regarding the key responsibilities of the PHA with respect to the programme can be found on page 3 of this Newsletter.

The Belfast Health & Social Care Trust (BH&SCT) continues to coordinate and manage the screening programme on a daily basis and is operationally responsible for inviting eligible men to attend for screening. The Trust also provides a surveillance programme for men identified with a small or medium AAA through the NIAAASP. Similarly, those men who are identified with a large AAA through the NIAAASP are referred to the multidisciplinary vascular team at the Trust to discuss potential treatment options.



'The AAA Team'

Clockwise from left: **Jacqueline McDevitt**, QA and Commissioning Support Manager (PHA), **Diane Stewart**, Programme Manager (BH&SCT), **Judith Holmes**, Screening Technician (BH&SCT), **Dr Adrian Mairs**, Public Health Lead for AAA Screening (PHA), **Mr Paul Blair**, Clinical Lead for AAA Screening (BH&SCT), Kathy McGuigan, Vascular Nurse Specialist (BH&SCT), **Gillian Murdock**, Screening Technician (BH&SCT), **Deirdre Kearns**, Senior Sonographer (BH&SCT) and **Helen McCann**, Administrative Assistant (PHA).

The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and the NIAAASP



Call for Screening Locations

Belfast Health & Social Care Trust hosts the Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm (AAA) Screening Programme for the whole of Northern Ireland. Although the Screening Office is based in the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast, the screening technicians travel across the region Monday to Friday each week to run clinics in 17 different locations.

We are continuing to look for suitable venues across the country to provide greater local access. Evidence shows that men who do not have to travel a long distance are more likely to attend their appointments.

If you would be interested in discussing running clinics in your area, please contact Diane Stewart on 2890 638256.

Diane Stewart, NIAAASP Programme Manager

Belfast Trust : Managerial Responsibility for the Programme

Hosting the NIAAASP requires the Belfast Trust to undertake a range of tasks which include:

- Setting up clinics in suitable locations
- Sending invites for screening to eligible men
- Carrying out the scans, rescans and surveillance scans
- Offering support and advice to men when an aneurysm is detected
- Referring men to the vascular service within the Belfast Trust when a large or very large aneurysm is detected
- Liaising with GPs regarding secondary care, particularly when a man is detected as having an aneurysm
- Local quality assurance of the screening process
- Providing reports on the performance of the programme, and data for quality assurance

As a GP or Practice Manager, you can help to improve the service by making sure that the **contact details on your systems are up to date ie Name, Address, DOB and Health & Care Number.**

In addition, after we have detected an aneurysm we will inform you and ask **YOU** to:

- **Take height, weight, BMI, blood pressure, systolic and diastolic measurements** – our Vascular Nurse Specialist will then contact the practice at a later date to get these details
- **Commence patients with an AAA on anti-platelet and statin therapy**, unless these medications are contraindicated
- **Ensure** all men 65 and over can make an informed choice about attending for AAA screening (men over 65 can self-refer by contacting the Screening Office); if you need another poster sent to the surgery, please contact the Screening Office on 02890 631828.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all our readers

from:

The NI AAA Screening Programme Team



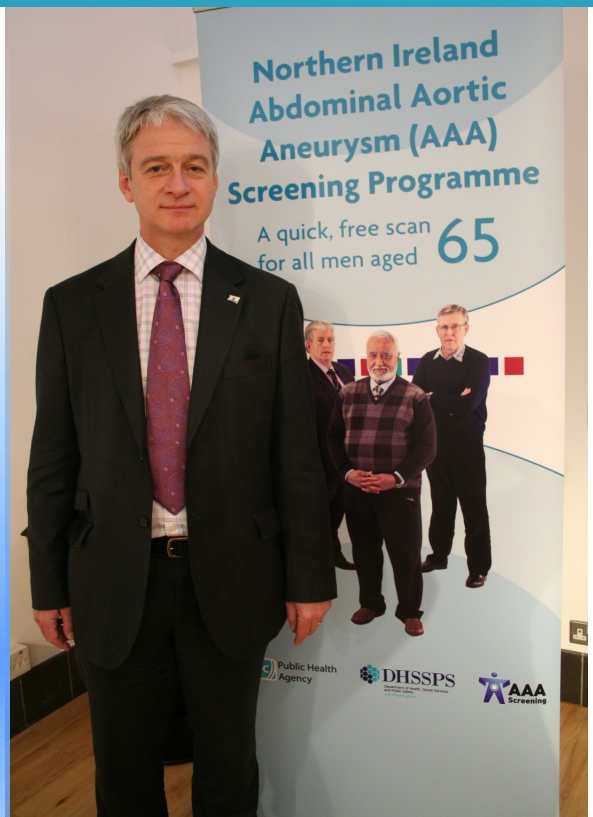
The PHA and the NIAAASP

The Public Health Agency has a number of key functions in relation to screening programmes including:

- * Leading on the implementation of screening policy, including the introduction of new screening programmes and any required changes to existing screening programmes.
- * Ensuring the delivery of high quality, safe, effective and equitable screening programmes for people in Northern Ireland.
- * Supporting continuous quality improvement through the implementation of standards, programme monitoring and evaluation, and adverse incident investigation and management.

Having successfully led the implementation of AAA Screening in NI (as per the UK National Screening Committee recommendation that screening for abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) should be offered to all men at age 65 years), the PHA will now focus on the establishment of a robust QA structure to ensure it meets the key functions outlined above.

In addition, following successful alignment with the National AAA Screening Programme in England in terms of training for screening staff, equipment procurement and adoption of the same IT Solution, the NIAAASP will work closely with English colleagues in the establishment of QA standards, programme monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Further updates will follow in subsequent issues of this Newsletter regarding progress on the establishment of an effective QA structure for the NIAAASP.



Dr Adrian Mairs, Consultant in Public Health Medicine and Project Lead for the NIAAASP

Did you know...

Currently 38 AAAs have been detected since the programme began on 18th June 2012. The majority of these are small aneurysms and the affected men now under surveillance.

Final Results of MASS Trial for AAA Screening

In 2004, the results of the largest ever randomised trial (the Multi-centre Aneurysm Screening Study - or MASS) into the merits of AAA Screening showed that, after ten years, screening reduced AAA mortality by 40% and incurred costs consistent with Department of Health funded activity.

The final follow-up report from this study has recently been published. These results demonstrate that AAA screening reduces both AAA mortality and all-cause mortality. They also show that AAA screening should continue to be cost-effective despite the current prevalence of AAAs among 65-year-old men being only about half that detected in the MASS trial. The report also suggests there may be merit in considering the following for further formal investigation:

- ⇒ Actively inviting all men aged 65 and over to attend for screening
- ⇒ Re-screening men with a 2.5-2.9 cm aorta within 6-7 years.

Further updates will follow as they become available regarding future developments for the programme.



The NI AAA Screening Programme: What it means for GPs?

The NIAAASP intends to keep primary care workload to a minimum. However, GPs have an important contribution to make to the successful operation of the programme. Below is the first of two articles which outline key procedures GPs should be aware of to help ensure an effective and efficient NI AAA Screening Programme:

What does the programme mean for a patient of mine who already has an AAA?

Please do not refer any man to the NIAAASP who has already been diagnosed with an AAA outside the programme. Management of these men should continue as per treatment and care pathways already established for them by the symptomatic service.

How are DNAs managed?

- Eligible men are sent an appointment approximately 3 weeks before their scan date.
- If a man DNAs, the Screening Office sends the man a second appointment for approximately 6 weeks to 3 months after the date of the first appointment.
- The man's GP is also notified that the man did not attend his first appointment.
- If a man DNAs again the Screening Office sends both parties another letter stating that the man did not attend, that no further appointments will be issued and the patient will be deactivated from the IT system.
- **HOWEVER**, the letter also states that if, in future, the man does want to take part in the programme he can contact the Screening Office and staff will reactivate his details and send him the next available appointment.

How are men advised of the outcome of their scan?

All men are given the results of their scan **VERBALLY** by the screening technician at the end of their appointment, regardless of the outcome. In addition:

- Men with a **NORMAL** aorta (96-98%) will receive a letter confirming this from the Screening Office; these men will also be discharged from the programme.
- Men with a **SMALL** AAA will receive a letter confirming the result and advising that they will be called for another screen in a year's time. These men will also previously have been provided with the Screening Office number and contacted by the Specialist Nurse within 2 days of their scan.
- Men with a **MEDIUM** AAA will receive a letter confirming the result and advising that they will be called for another screen in three months' time. These men will also previously have been provided with the Screening Office number and contacted by the Specialist Nurse within 2 days of their scan.
- Men with a **LARGE** AAA will immediately be referred to a the specialist vascular team at the Belfast Trust to be seen within 2-3 weeks. The Screening Office will notify the man's GP of the results and request further information on the man's general health. The man will also be provided with the Screening Office number and contacted by the Specialist Nurse within 2 days, or sooner if necessary. If the man has any immediate concerns he will be advised to contact his GP.

The next Newsletter will contain details on care pathways for large and very large AAAs.

Key contacts: Belfast H&SC Trust

Clinical Lead: Mr Paul Blair, 02890 633972

Imaging Lead: Mr Peter Ellis, 02890 636730

Programme Mgr: Ms Diane Stewart, 02890 638256

Deputy Programme Mgr: Mrs Angela Ferguson

Key contacts: PHA

Project Lead: Dr Adrian Mairs, 02890 311611

QA & Commissioning Support Manager:

Mrs Jacqueline McDevitt, 02890 311611

Admin Assistant: Ms Helen McCann, 02890 311611

