

Wiltshire Council

Health Select Committee

17 January 2013

Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm (AAA) Screening Programme

Executive summary

This paper is to inform the Health Select Committee about the AAA screening service for Wiltshire.

Proposal

That the committee:

Notes the creation of an AAA screening service for Wiltshire males aged 65.

Reason for proposal

The offer of screening scans for AAA to Wiltshire males aged 65 began in November 2012.

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Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm (AAA) Screening Programme

Purpose of report

1. This paper is to inform the Health Select Committee about the AAA screening service for Wiltshire.

Background

2. The aorta is the largest artery in the body, extending from the left side of the heart down into the abdomen. The abdominal aorta (the part of the aorta that runs through the abdomen) can sometimes develop an aneurysm. This is a localised weak spot that causes part of the artery to swell like a balloon. Aneurysms are more common in men, in people with high blood pressure and in those over the age of 65.

3. Most aortic aneurysms are asymptomatic until they are on the point of rupturing. Some patients have their condition detected during imaging processes for an unrelated cause, but most present as a rupture. The only treatment currently for this condition is surgery which requires a vascular surgeon, as well as the skilled attention from medical and nursing staff in the operating theatre, in intensive care and on the surgical ward.

4. Deaths from a ruptured AAA account for an estimated 2.1% of all deaths in men aged 65 and over. This compares with approximately 0.8% in women of the same age. Mortality from rupture is high, with nearly a third dying in the community before reaching hospital. Of those who undergo AAA emergency surgery, the post-operative mortality rate is around 50%, making the case fatality after rupture 82%. This compares with a post-operative mortality rate in high quality vascular services of 3-8% following planned surgery.

5. Over the 5 years from 2007 to 2011, on average, 23 Wiltshire men died each year from a ruptured AAA.

6. In 2008, the Department of Health announced the introduction of a National Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm Screening Programme (NAAASP) for men aged 65. Phased implementation nationally commenced in March 2009.

Wiltshire's AAA Screening Programme

7. As part of the National AAA Screening Programme, and in accordance with the wishes of Wiltshire GPs, Public Health Wiltshire has worked with NHS Dorset to provide an AAA screening service for Wiltshire and Dorset males aged 65.

8. NHS Wiltshire, NHS Dorset and NHS Bournemouth and Poole agreed to jointly commission a provider for the AAA screening service. A competitive tender process was undertaken, with Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust (SFT) awarded the contract in April 2012. Subsequently, SFT procured appropriate specialist imaging equipment, recruited and trained screening staff, and began to invite patients for screening in November.

9. The screening programme is run from an administrative hub at SFT and screening scans are performed locally, in community settings around the counties of

Dorset and Wiltshire. Separate clinics will be held at HMP Erlestoke for Wiltshire prisoners who meet the eligibility requirements for screening.

10. Depending on the results of their screening scan, men will follow one of these pathways:

- a. Normal result (Aorta < 3cm) = no further scans required.
- b. Small AAA (Aorta 3 – 4.4cm) = repeat scan in one year.
- c. Medium AAA (Aorta 4.5 – 5.4cm) = repeat scan in 3 months.
- d. Large AAA (Aorta ≥ 5.5cm) = refer to surgeon in vascular network to consider elective repair of AAA.

11. Where possible, natural patient flows in Wiltshire will be maintained, with patients being referred to their nearest appropriate hospital for elective surgery, if required.

Equality and diversity impact

12. Following recommendations by the National Screening Committee, on the 4th January 2008, the Secretary of State for Health announced the introduction of a national screening programme for men aged 65. Not implementing an AAA screening programme would have led to inequity for the Wiltshire population.

Risk assessment

13. Not implementing the AAA Screening Programme would result in undetected AAAs rupturing, with the consequent risk of death for patients.

14. Not implementing the AAA Screening Programme would have placed Wiltshire as an outlier in not providing this service and thus at risk of public and other challenges.

Financial implications

15. There are no financial implications for Wiltshire Council as full funding for the first 18 months of screening is provided by the Department of Health, with subsequent funding from the NHS National Commissioning Board.

16. There are not expected to be overall financial savings for the NHS associated with the NAAASP. The Department of Health decision to implement the NAAASP was based on the reduction in AAA-related deaths from trials and the expectation was not that it would be a cost saving exercise.

Conclusion

17. There is an AAA screening service for Wiltshire males aged 65.