

Irish Cardiac Society calls for rapid Community Heart Failure diagnosis

News Release: Friday May 6th 2016

Professor Ken McDonald, President of the Irish Cardiac Society, has called for rapid Community Heart Failure Diagnosis to mark European Heart Failure Awareness Day, May 6th 2016.

“Although traditionally regarded as having a poor prognosis with little therapies to improve outlook, recent advances in heart failure therapies have dramatically changed this and led to much better quality of life and longer lives for people with heart failure” said Prof McDonald, a consultant cardiologist specialising in heart failure . “However, the critical first step for many of our patients in the community is rapid access to an accurate diagnosis and the definition of a care strategy following consultation between the general practitioner and the cardiologist”. “At present this is compromised by difficulties experienced by our General Practitioners in getting access to important diagnostic tests and specialist opinion, leading to people with heart failure not receiving access to these life-changing therapies. A 6 month delay in diagnosis is estimated to lead to a 23% increase in emergency hospitalisation for people with suspected heart failure”.

To highlight this issue the Irish Cardiac Society established a North South GP / Specialist Working group who have agreed an approach to community diagnosis of this condition, which they feel should be universally available on the island of Ireland and which emphasises the importance of access to diagnostic tests for heart failure. The Irish Cardiac Society encourages all involved in providing resources in health care on the island to work towards achieving specific goals over the next 12-24 months.

The society believes that ensuring rapid access to relevant diagnostics within a 2-6 week period, dependent on the severity of presentation, and subsequent specialist opinion within a further 4 weeks, will be a marked improvement on current delays which today can be in excess of 1 year. This would result in speedy accurate diagnosis, careful planning of a treatment plan and significant reduction in subsequent Emergency Department attendance and emergency hospitalisation.

Ends.

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Note to Editors:

About Heart Failure in Ireland:

Heart failure prevalence is increasing, affecting 2% of the population on the island of Ireland, with numbers set to grow as the population ages and associated conditions, in particular diabetes, become more prevalent. The cost of heart failure approximates one billion euro across the island, driven primarily by hospital bed days numbering in excess of 230,000 bed days from emergency hospitalisation in the Republic of Ireland in 2012 alone.

About Diagnostic Tests for Heart Failure:

The main diagnostic tests required for this pathway are natriuretic peptides (a blood test) and echocardiography (an ultrasound scan of the heart). Natriuretic peptides are proteins produced when the heart is under stress or strain. A normal natriuretic peptide means that the GP need not send the patient for echocardiography and reduces demand on this service by 30%. Echocardiography is an ultrasound of the heart which allows the doctor to see if there are abnormalities of structure or function of the heart consistent with heart failure and is essential to confirm the diagnosis and guide treatment. Lack of access or delays in accessing these tests from the community leads to delays in diagnosis and emergency hospitalisations for this condition.

About the Irish Cardiac Society:

The Irish Cardiac Society is the professional society in Ireland for those whose primary interest is in the practice of Cardiology, Cardiovascular Surgery and Cardiovascular Research. www.irishcardiacsociety.com

About the North South GP / Specialist Care Initiative :

The North South GP / Specialist Care Initiative is a working group of the Irish Cardiac Society involving general practitioners and cardiologists from both from the Republic and Northern Ireland and cardiologists from both regions as well. The purpose of this group is to advise and discuss matters of mutual importance relating to Cardiovascular Disease, striving to improve the links between primary and secondary care.

About European Heart Failure Awareness Day – May 6th:

Heart Failure Awareness Day, an initiative of the European Society of Cardiology is designed to raise awareness about the importance of recognising Heart Failure, getting an accurate diagnosis and receiving optimal treatment.

[http://www.escardio.org/The-ESC/Communities/Heart-Failure-Association-\(HFA\)/Heart-failure-awareness-day/European-Heart-Failure-Awareness-Day](http://www.escardio.org/The-ESC/Communities/Heart-Failure-Association-(HFA)/Heart-failure-awareness-day/European-Heart-Failure-Awareness-Day)