Opportunistic screening for **Atrial Fibrillation** for over 65 year olds during flu clinics and anticoagulation for the prevention of stroke in primary care  

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### Spreading the word

Atrial Fibrillation (AF) greatly increases your risk of having a stroke, so it is important that it is detected and treated. The Ask First leaflet published by The Stroke Association has been displayed in all GP Practices to encourage patients to ask for a pulse check.

Patients and staff have been made aware of the campaign through information posted on the internet and intranet sites, which includes a short video by Dr Adam Fraser explaining to patients why detecting AF is important and how it is performed whilst attending for a flu vaccination.

### Background

It is expected that stroke prevalence will grow by 1.2% by 2020 in Dorset which is faster than the South West or England average. Dorset CCG has an AF prevalence rate of 2.6% compared to the National rate of 1.2%.

Following a successful pilot in the Weymouth and Portland Locality in 2013, pulse checks were performed on 51% of over 65 year olds in 68 (70%) of practices across all 13 Localities in Dorset with the following aims:

- To identify patients with previously undiagnosed AF.
- To ensure identified patients are aware of the risk of suffering a stroke.
- To offer anticoagulation therapy to patients at risk.
- Establish effective anticoagulation with regular review.
- No more than 25% of patients contraindicated for or refused anticoagulation.
- To embed pulse checks into everyday practice.

### Outcomes of 2014/15 initiative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number (%) of pulse checks in flu clinics</th>
<th>Number (%) of ECGs performed on those pulse checked</th>
<th>Number (%) of newly diagnosed patients with AF as a result of ECG</th>
<th>Percentage of patients with newly diagnosed AF from participating practices</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>61,568 (51%)</td>
<td>2,663 (4.3%)</td>
<td>439 (16.5%)</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
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### Observations

- The number of pulse checks varied considerably between practices, ranging from 8% to 78% of people over 65 years with an average of 51%.
- The ECG activity was higher than expected and again varied considerably between practices; between 1 and 184 ECGs were performed at each practice.
- The number of people identified with AF was higher than anticipated from the pilot study which identified 0.3% of new patients with 0.4% in 2014.
- There is no evidence that the initiative impacted negatively on the flu vaccination uptake which had been a concern initially in the pilot study.
- The initial pilot Locality of Weymouth and Portland continued to identify new patients with AF suggesting there is benefit in repeating this initiative in consecutive years.
- Only one secondary care trust observed an increase in cardiology workload but managed this within their clinic capacity.

### Challenges

- Many practices were slow in submitting their GRASP report due to unfamiliarity with the PRIMIS tools.
- The MIQUEST query built for data extraction did not produce robust data. Practices were asked to submit manual data alongside this which was time consuming.
- Practices without ECG machines were unable to implement the service.
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### Next steps

All practices in Dorset will be invited to provide the service during the 2015 Flu Clinic season. Twenty practices in Dorset who completed the project and provide the Primary Care Anticoagulation Service Specification are being offered the following next step:

- **Review 2014.15 GRASP-AF CHART ONLINE**
  - Report and identify patients not anticoagulated (75% of patients expected to be anticoagulated)
  - Provide the rationale for those not anticoagulated
  - Run Warfarin Safety Tool and review patients with TTR below 65%

- **Report and share with CCG, GRASP-AF CHART ONLINE and Warfarin Safety Tool CHART ONLINE**
  - with a summary of outcomes pre and post treatment optimisation review.

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Mrs Peggy Hansford (86) guessed that something was wrong when she was not able to walk as far as the bus stop she had always used and was rather breathless.

“"I was not really able to do the things I used to do”, said Mrs Hansford. But she was caring for her husband John and didn’t go to the doctors. Then she had her pulse checked when she went for her flu jab in the autumn and that gave her the reason why.

A follow-up ECG confirmed that she had atrial fibrillation and she is now relieved that she is on medication to help her avoid having a stroke. She has regular checks at Lanehouse Surgery in Weymouth.

“I have been coming to the doctors at Lanehouse since 1950 when the GP then held his surgeries at his home”, said Mrs Hansford. “They are very good - and they were always good to my husband too. I feel very supported. They are almost like a part of my family.”