

# The Pulse

November 2023

Issue 5



British Heart  
Foundation



## Communities in action

How research could improve lives after a stroke

Host a heart-healthy dinner party

CPR and defibrillators – saving lives locally

...and much more, inside!

# Welcome to the latest issue of The Pulse

Hello, I'm Professor Sir Nilesh Samani the Medical Director at British Heart Foundation (BHF), it's my honour to introduce you to this year's edition of The Pulse.



As someone who has generously left us a gift in their will, I want to make sure you know where your donation will be going, and what a difference it will make to people living with heart and circulatory diseases.

It goes without saying that, in the last few years, the world has changed dramatically. For many, the repercussions of the pandemic may still be affecting daily life. At BHF we've certainly seen the impact on diagnosis and treatment of heart and circulatory diseases in the UK.

However, we are always focused on moving forward, finding new opportunities and funding research to outsmart these conditions. It's gifts – like the one you're leaving us – that make this possible. Your gift also makes you part of the broader BHF community – and I'm grateful to have you among us.

That's why I hope you find our hints and tips helpful, and you're inspired by the success stories inside. Stories like that of Professor Wardlaw – whose research could pave the way for the first proven treatments for lacunar stroke. Just one of the strides being made by the scientific community in our mission to thwart some of the UK's biggest killers. And Alan's story, a cyclist whose life was saved thanks to people trained in CPR and a defibrillator nearby when he needed them.

As you read this edition, I hope you're rightfully proud of the part your gift will play, empowering us to make a difference to more people's lives every day.

**Professor Sir Nilesh Samani**  
Medical Director

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# A BHF-funded breakthrough from the scientific community

## How research is making strides for people affected by stroke

Lacunar stroke is a type of stroke thought to be caused by cerebral small vessel disease (cSVD). The ambition of the research was to find out if two existing drugs could help prevent dementia after lacunar stroke.

## Why the research matters

This type of stroke accounts for about a fifth of all strokes, with at least 25,000 lacunar strokes happening each year in the UK. They can lead to people developing problems with their thinking, memory, movement, and ultimately dementia - but there are currently no proven effective preventive treatments. Overall, cSVD is thought to contribute to around 40 per cent of dementia cases.

## What the research involved

It's known that two existing medications can help improve the function of blood vessel cells called endothelial cells, which help to keep our circulatory system working properly and protected from damage. Led by Professor Joanna Wardlaw at the University of Edinburgh, the BHF-funded LACunar Intervention Trial-2

(LACI-2) aimed to explore whether these medications could be used as treatments for lacunar stroke. This was a small scale trial involving 400 people who had experienced a lacunar stroke, and if initial findings were promising it would make the case for a larger scale trial to get definitive results.

**“Far too many are living with the after-effects of this type of stroke, so finding a treatment would be fantastic.**

– Ian Reynolds, LACI-2 Research Participant

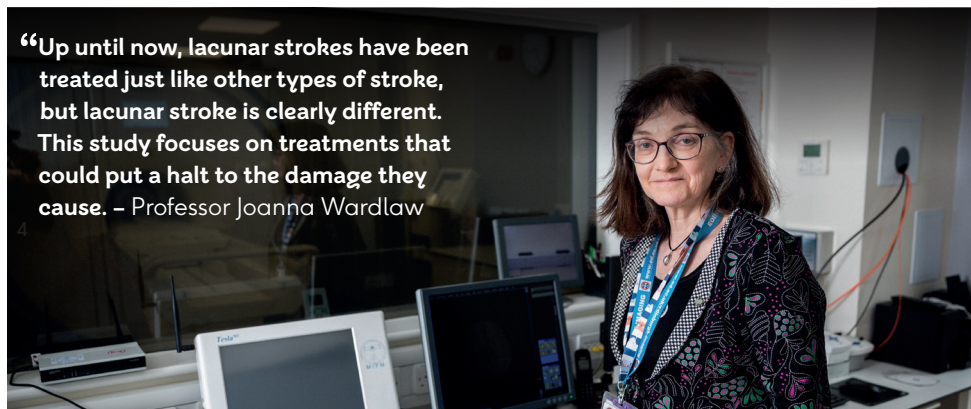
## What the outcome was

It provided evidence for running a larger scale trial and suggested the medications used might be beneficial in the treatment of lacunar stroke - particularly when they're used in combination - providing hope that they could become some of the first proven treatments for this debilitating condition.

## How this relates to leaving a gift in your will

Research like this can take time, but will have significant impact. Your gift will help us to keep funding the next big breakthroughs to save and improve lives.

**“Up until now, lacunar strokes have been treated just like other types of stroke, but lacunar stroke is clearly different. This study focuses on treatments that could put a halt to the damage they cause. – Professor Joanna Wardlaw**



# More news from the BHF community

## Ambulances should take cardiac arrest patients to closest emergency department

The trial, which involved the London Ambulance Service and every hospital in London, found no difference in 30-day survival for out-of-hospital cardiac arrest (OHCA) patients who were taken by ambulance to a specialist cardiac arrest centre compared with those delivered to the geographically closest emergency department.

The study also found no overall difference in brain and nerve function at discharge and at three months between the specialist centre and emergency department groups.

## Royal Mail fundraising enables BHF to offer freephone patient helpline service.

Thanks to fundraising through our partnership with Royal Mail, our vital Heart Helpline is now free to call for the first time since the service was first made available over 20 years ago.

Our Cardiac Nurses provide information on heart-related conditions, including stroke, vascular dementia, and associated risk factors such as diabetes.

## Making sure everyone's served by our research.

Heart and circulatory diseases are often diseases of inequality, and many groups are currently under-served by cardiovascular research. Amending our research funding application forms to help encourage inclusive research design is one step that BHF is making towards tackling these inequalities.

## Professor Bryan Williams joins BHF as Chief Science and Medical Officer (CSMO)

Taking on this newly created role, Professor Williams will be leading our research and medical strategy. “I'm really looking forward to it, and working with BHF's incredible colleagues, volunteers and supporters.” Professor Williams is recognised as one of the UK's most influential scientific and clinical leaders. He is Chair of Medicine at University College London (UCL), Director of the NIHR University College London Hospitals Biomedical Research Centre, and UCLH Director of Research. As CSMO, a large part of his job is to set our vision and strategy for the future. His appointment marks an exciting progression for BHF, ushering in a new era of leadership and guidance.

Read more about the achievements and BHF communities at [bhf.org.uk/news](https://bhf.org.uk/news)

# Host a heart-healthy dinner party

An active social life isn't just good for the soul, it's good for the heart too. Spending time in good company can make a world of difference by reducing stress, alleviating depression and lowering blood pressure.

So, with that in mind, why not reach out to your nearest and dearest and invite them round for a three-course meal with healthy options that still taste great/have the wow factor – and you don't need a culinary degree to cook.

All recipes serve 2, adjust according to your guest list.



## To start: Beetroot Barley Risotto

### Ingredients:

1 tsp olive oil / 100g pearl barley / ½ small onion, peeled and chopped / ½ clove of garlic, peeled and crushed / 100g fresh beetroot, peeled and grated / 250ml vegetable stock made from a low-salt stock cube / 10g pecans or hazelnuts, chopped / 30g low-fat soft cheese / 2 tbsp chopped fresh dill

### To serve:

25g fresh rocket  
30g 0% fat Greek-style natural yoghurt mixed with 1 tbsp chopped fresh dill

### Method:

1. Heat the olive oil in a large non-stick pan and add the pearl barley and onion. Cook, stirring, for two minutes, then add the garlic, grated beetroot and stock. Bring to the boil, reduce the heat and simmer covered for 30 minutes, stirring from time to time until liquid is absorbed, and barley is tender.
2. Toss in the chopped pecans and soft cheese, stirring until cheese melts into the risotto. Stir in the dill.
3. Divide between two warmed, shallow serving dishes and top with rocket and dill yoghurt.

Discover more heart-healthy recipes you'll love at [bhf.org.uk/recipefinder](https://bhf.org.uk/recipefinder)

## For the main: Beef and Mushroom Stroganoff



### Ingredients:

100g brown rice (or a brown and wild rice mix if you prefer) / 250g lean sirloin steak, trimmed of any fat / 1 tbsp sunflower oil / 2 shallots, peeled and sliced or 3 small onions, peeled and sliced / 150g portobello mushrooms, wiped and sliced / ½ tsp paprika / 1 tbsp tomato puree / 80ml red wine (or low salt beef stock) / 3 tbsp 0% fat Greek-style natural yogurt / 2 tbsp flat leaf parsley, chopped / Freshly ground black pepper

For a vegetarian version, try swapping beef for a meat-alternative like Quorn or a mushroom medley and use a vegetable stock.

### Method:

1. Cook the rice in a pan of water according to pack instructions.
2. Meanwhile, slice the beef into thin strips. Heat the oil in a large non-stick saucepan and fry the beef with the shallots or onions and mushrooms for 5 minutes until meat is sealed on all sides and onions and mushrooms are beginning to soften.
3. Sprinkle the paprika over, stir well, then add the tomato puree and red wine along with 100ml boiling water. Stir and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat and simmer for 15 minutes.
4. Stir in the yogurt, parsley and black pepper to taste. Serve with the cooked brown rice.

## And for dessert: Tiramisu

### Ingredients:

4 sponge fingers, about 28g / 2 tbsp strong espresso or instant coffee / 1 tbsp brandy (optional) / 120g reduced-fat custard / 115g (4oz) fat-free fromage frais / Few drops vanilla extract, optional / 1 square dark chocolate / ¼ tsp cocoa powder



### Method:

1. Break 2 of the sponge fingers into small pieces and drop into the base of 2 small serving dishes.
2. Mix together the coffee and brandy, if using, and spoon half the mixture over the sponge fingers.
3. Stir the custard into the fromage frais with the vanilla, if using, and spoon half the mixture over the coffee-soaked fingers.
4. Break the remaining sponge fingers over the top, drizzle with the coffee and finish with the remaining custard mixture.
5. Cover and chill for at least 8 hours or overnight. To serve, finely grate the chocolate over the top and dust with the cocoa powder.



# Saved by a group effort – and a defibrillator

On 27th June 2018, 61-year-old health enthusiast, Alan Thompson, was just four miles into a long bike ride when he collapsed at a T-junction in a small village called Smisby.

Along for the ride was his brother David, who heard Alan make a grunting sound before he fell sideways off his bike. David's first thought was that Alan had forgotten to unclip from his pedals. However, he soon realised that it was something more serious. Alan had gone into ventricular fibrillation which caused a cardiac arrest.

## The power of community

At almost the same time that Alan fell, two nursery school assistants, Laura and Nicola, were returning to the village from their lunch break. They stopped and quickly got out of the car to see what was wrong and assist where they could. Recognising the need for intervention they quickly put their CPR training into practice, allowing David to make the 999 call and give details of the incident.

"My brother remembers having thinking that it truly looked like I had a team of doctors around me, a testament to everybody's skill and expertise in putting their training into practice"

While they waited for the ambulance to arrive, one of the assistants had phoned the owner of the nursery, an ex-fireman

who came running down from the nursery some 300 metres away, taking over the CPR on arrival and asking Laura to run to the village hall to get the community defibrillator.

Mike, an airline pilot that was also on the scene and had joined the effort to revive Alan, assessed the situation and used the defibrillator to shock him. By the time both the land and air ambulances arrived, Alan was breathing – and his heart was beating.

## The road to recovery

Paramedics took over at the scene, making sure Alan was stabilised and ready to be transferred to Derby Royal Hospital by land ambulance. Once there, he was admitted to intensive care and, Once there, he was admitted to intensive care and had two stents fitted that afternoon.

Alan was kept unconscious overnight. Once he was woken up and indications suggested that he had not been adversely affected by lack of oxygen to the brain – a reflection of the speed of care and attention that he received at the scene – he was moved to the cardiac ward ready to start his recovery journey.

## Defibrillators – the difference between life and death

Had it not been for someone else's cardiac arrest, Alan's story may have taken a different turn. The defibrillator used to shock his heart back into a normal rhythm had only been installed following a campaign led by Ruth Green, a Respiratory Doctor who lives in the village. While taking part in a charity run, another runner went down in front of her and had a sudden cardiac arrest. She gave him CPR, but this event spurred her on to campaign and organise one for the village.

## The Circuit – a UK-wide defibrillator database

We developed The Circuit as part of our mission to improve the UK's out-of-hospital cardiac arrest survival rates. Its aim is to map all public access defibrillators, so that when someone has a cardiac arrest, 999 call handlers can direct bystanders to the nearest registered defibrillator while they wait for the ambulance to arrive.

## You could be a local lifesaver

Alan's life was saved by passers-by knowing CPR and where the nearest defibrillator was. As many of us will witness a cardiac arrest in our lifetime, it pays to be as informed about what to do as possible.

## Register your defibrillator

If you're a guardian of a defibrillator, or know someone who is, make sure it's registered at [thecircuit.uk](https://thecircuit.uk)



# Thank you

Thank you again for the gift you're leaving us.  
It will make a huge difference to people living  
with heart and circulatory diseases in the future.



# Get involved

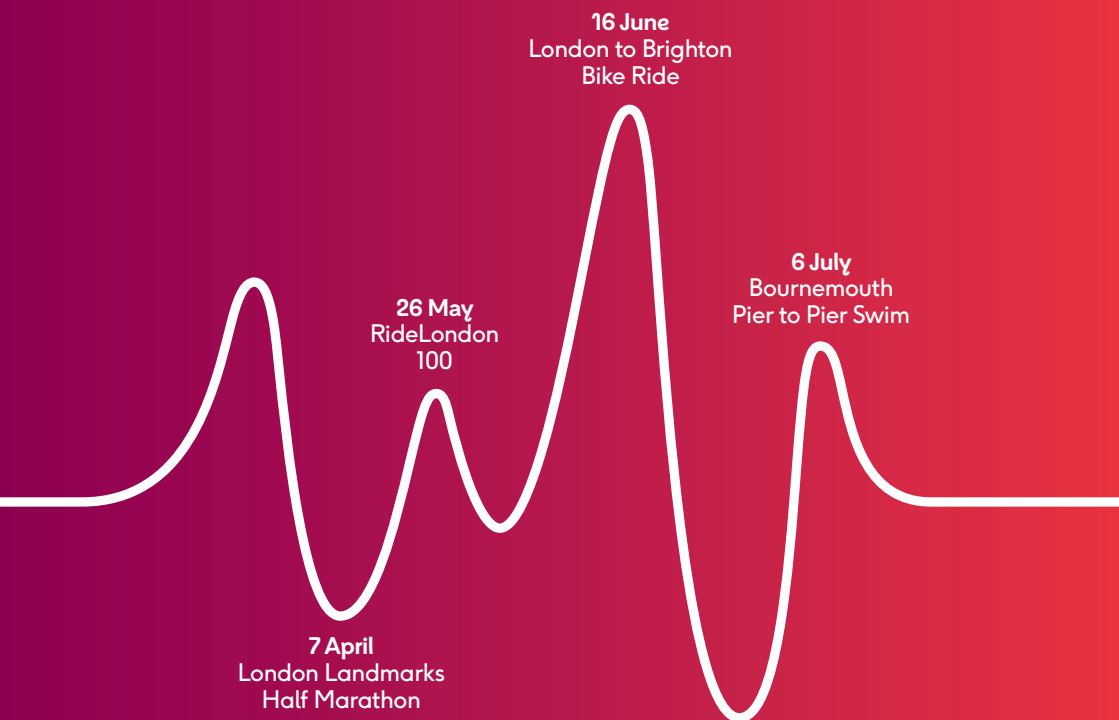
**There are lots of ways to broaden your social horizons, and get involved in your local community, whatever your interests.**

1. If you're living with a heart or circulatory condition, or just have questions, our online community HealthUnlocked offers support from, and connections with, people who have had similar experiences. Just visit [healthunlocked.com/bhf](https://healthunlocked.com/bhf)
2. Volunteering at a BHF event. Every year BHF are at London to Brighton bike ride and Bournemouth pier to pier swim find out which events we're part of at [bhf.org.uk/fundraisingvolunteering](https://bhf.org.uk/fundraisingvolunteering)

3. Volunteer at your local BHF shop. You'll get to work with our fantastic team, meet people from all walks of life and make a difference to people living with heart and circulatory conditions across the UK. Drop into your nearest branch and ask about volunteering or go to [bhf.org.uk/volunteering](https://bhf.org.uk/volunteering)
4. Learn CPR in just 15 minutes. RevivR is our free, interactive, online CPR training course. In just 15 minutes, you can learn how to save a life and receive your very own CPR certificate.  
  
**Visit [bhf.org.uk/revivr](https://bhf.org.uk/revivr) and learn how to do CPR in just 15 minutes.**



# What's happening in 2024?



## Three ways to make a donation today.

If you'd like to make a difference to someone's life today, you can donate by visiting [bhf.org.uk/donate](https://bhf.org.uk/donate), scan the QR code or call us on 0300 330 3322.



British Heart Foundation is a registered charity in England and Wales (225971) and in Scotland (SC039426)