

UK Member of the European Parliament Joins the Call for the Prevention of Atrial Fibrillation-Related Strokes to be Made a National Healthcare Priority

Urgent Need to Reduce the Devastating Personal and Economic Impact of these Severe Strokes

Brussels, Belgium – October 24, 2012 – Ahead of World Stroke Day 2012 (October 29), British Member of the European Parliament (MEP), Rebecca Taylor, has joined many other EU policy makers as well as 90 Medical and Patient Organisations, and more than 100,000 people, in supporting the Global Atrial Fibrillation (AF) Patient Charter and calling for National Governments and the World Health Organisation to act to make the prevention of AF-related strokes a priority. The Charter outlines ways to improve the diagnosis and management of AF which, if implemented, could stop thousands of preventable strokes from occurring each and every year.

Why Action is Needed Now?

This is an epidemic already in progress,

“The Global AF Patient Charter is a good reference for National Ministries of Health across the 27 European Member States and I would urge the UK government to endorse it,” said MEP Rebecca Taylor. *“The Charter recommendations could help the government reduce the heavy socio-economic burden of AF-related strokes.”*

The financial burden placed on the UK healthcare system by stroke is huge. Stroke is estimated to cost the NHS more than £3 billion every year. The related NHS cost for each AF-associated stroke is £11,900 in the first year after the stroke. This can increase by up to a further £8,000 a year if the stroke is disablingⁱ.

The personal impact for AF-related stroke survivors and their families cannot be underestimated with more than a third of survivors returning home with some level of permanent disabilityⁱⁱ. AF also increases the risk of medical complications following a stroke with survivors suffering more frequently from conditions such as pneumonia and accumulation of fluid in the lungs.

Strokes are Preventable: Prevent Them!

However, the majority of these strokes are preventable. Whilst there is no quick or easy solution, there are steps that can be taken to improve awareness, detection, diagnosis and management of AF to reduce the number of people whose lives are devastated every year.

"The All Party Parliamentary Group on AF set up by the UK Parliament is a great step towards increasing awareness of strokes and AF-related strokes and driving policy change and could serve as a good example to other national parliaments," noted MEP Taylor. *"However, access to education, early diagnosis of AF and appropriate management to prevent AF-related strokes must become a national healthcare priority with a dedicated strategy."*

A Worldwide Unified Voice

The Global AF Patient Charter is supported by over 90 Medical and Patient Organisations around the world. Its supporting campaign, *Sign Against Stroke in Atrial Fibrillation*, is calling for individuals around the world to sign their names on SignAgainstStroke.com to demonstrate their support for the Charter and ask National Governments to implement its recommendations to prevent AF-related strokes.

"I am so excited to see the rapidly increasing support for the Global AF Patient Charter," said Trudie Lobban MBE, Founder and Trustee, Arrhythmia Alliance, and Co-Founder and CEO, Atrial Fibrillation Association. *"Over 100,000 policy makers, healthcare professionals, patients, their families and members of the general public have supported the Charter by signing their names at SignAgainstStroke.com. This is a demonstration of how important it is that AF-related stroke is prevented and with this support we can drive change."*

About The Global AF Patient Charter and *Sign Against Stroke* Campaign

The Global AF Patient Charter has been developed by a Steering Committee comprised of representatives from Patient Organisations, including AntiCoagulation Europe, Arrhythmia Alliance, Atrial Fibrillation Association, Irish Heart Foundation, StopAfib.org and Stroke Alliance for Europe, in

collaboration with 39 founding Patient Organisations from 20 countries. A full listing of collaborating organisations is available on the website, www.signagainststroke.com.

People can learn about AF and stroke, read and sign the Charter, which is available in 22 languages, and hear what policy makers have to say on the Campaign website, www.signagainststroke.com. All signatures contribute to driving action to prevent AF-related strokes and improving future outcomes and quality of life of people diagnosed with AF.

The website also features videos of MEP Taylor and other Members of the European Parliament from different political groups and countries who have come together to explain how to improve the diagnosis and management of AF and to urge national governments to make the prevention of AF-related strokes a national healthcare priority.

Bayer HealthCare is proud to support the Global AF Patient Charter and *Sign Against Stroke* Campaign.

The Global AF Patient Charter has been independently developed by a committee of patient groups. Bayer Pharma AG has provided funding for the secretariat to support the committee and funds the Sign Against Stroke Campaign.

Media Contact:

Melissa Gonzalez
Email: m.gonzalez@togorun.net
Tel: +1 (212) 453 2047

References:

-
- ⁱ Stroke Prevention in Atrial Fibrillation Expert Report
<http://www.anticoagulationeurope.org/files/files/booklets/The%20sAFe%20report.pdf>
Luengo-Fernandez R et al M., Population-based study of acute and long-term health and social care costs after stroke in patients with AF.
Int J Stroke 2012; online publication ahead of print 23. Atrial Fibrillation Association
- ⁱⁱ Wolfe CD, Rudd AG. The Burden of Stroke white Paper: Raising awareness of the global toll of stroke related disability and death