

# Heart Failure Awareness

## INTRODUCTION

This year was the first European-wide heart failure awareness day – a European Society of Cardiology initiative and supported by our British Society of Heart Failure.

Rotherham is a town covering 109 square miles in South Yorkshire where the 253,400 population (2007) mostly live in urban areas. The town declined following the reduction of coal mining and steel making, and has low levels of deprivation in employment, health and disability. 35.2% of the population is aged 50 years and over, and the number of people aged over 65 is projected to increase by 26% by 2018 (Office of National Statistics)

From Rotherham's disease register April 2010, there are currently 11,273 on the Coronary Heart Disease register and 2,081 on the Heart Failure register.

To mark the first Heart Failure awareness day, a town centre public event was planned to raise much needed awareness of heart failure and this was endorsed by newspaper articles in order to capture a larger audience.

Our continued goal is to improve awareness of Heart Failure and to break down misconceptions. We aim to empower people with knowledge, and to provide a basic pathway of what to expect if they have unexplained shortness of breath, ankle swelling. Our goal is to achieve earlier diagnosis of heart failure, to increase numbers of patients on optimum therapy and to reduce hospital admissions. In Rotherham we also strive to achieve a better patient journey with access to heart failure specialist nurses, palliative heart failure specialist nurse, mental health specialist nurse input (if required), cardiac dietician and cardiac physiotherapist. Also giving patients access to exercise, educational courses and a heart support group.

## THE EVENT

### ADVERTISING

- Used Rotherham Borough Council website and advertised on the "What's on" and forthcoming events page
- Advertised the event on local radio
- Modified the Heart Failure Awareness Poster and displayed these in local shops, GP surgeries and pharmacies
- An article was published in the local newspaper to explain about the forthcoming event

### INFORMATION

- In Rotherham we formulated a **4 STEP PLAN** to provide people with a pathway they could expect to follow, if they answered positively to the Heart Failure Awareness day question of "Do you have unexplained shortness of breath, swollen ankles?"
- Heart failure leaflets and booklets were dispensed to give general information and to increase knowledge, we also gave out flyers with website addresses – [www.heartfailurematters.org](http://www.heartfailurematters.org) [www.bhf.org.uk](http://www.bhf.org.uk) [www.cardiomyopathy.org](http://www.cardiomyopathy.org)
- Rotherham's Heart failure specialist nurses, palliative heart failure specialist nurse, cardiac support nurse (for mental health) and the Echocardiography manager were all present to talk to people and to offer advice and information
- Patient representatives attended the event in order to share their experiences
- We also had representatives to promote Rotherham's very popular Heart Support Group which is run by patients and holds varied weekly activities and monthly meetings – this is a very successful service

### FOCUS

- To create more public interest and to break down misconceptions of living with heart failure, we had an open air demonstration of Tai Chi - Heart Failure patients in Rotherham are offered modified tai chi classes as part of their treatment

### SUPPORT

- Appearances from the Rotherham Rugby Team – to increase public interest and to provide photographic opportunities for media coverage
- Gained support from a well known supermarket chain who provided refreshment to give to passing public
- Support in the nature of raffle prizes ie: family tickets to local attraction, football match tickets – these were used in fundraising for the British Heart Foundation and The Cardiomyopathy Association



### THE 4 STEP PLAN

**Step One**....Get Information, Today!

**Step Two**....Contact your GP

**Step Three**....Investigations that you may need:

1. Echocardiogram – a painless, scan of your heart
2. Electrocardiogram/ECG – a heart monitoring device
3. Blood tests – general tests and also sometimes a special blood test is used which can show if you are likely or not likely to have heart failure

*If you have been diagnosed with heart failure:*

**Step Four**....Treatment

Medication – ask us today about the main heart failure medication

Changes to lifestyle that will keep you well

Support – Rotherham's services for you

Knowledge – so you can recognise symptoms and know what to do

## References

Barrow D E, Bedford A et al, *An evaluation of the effects of Tai Chi Chuan and Chi Kung training in patients with symptomatic heart failure, a randomised control pilot study.* Post Graduate Medical Journal 2007; 83: 717-721

Channer K S, and Barrow D, *Changes in haemodynamic parameters following Tai Chi Chuan and aerobic exercise in patients recovering from acute myocardial infarction.* Post Graduate Medical Journal 1996; 72: 349-351

