Managing Cardiovascular Disease in Primary Care

From Policy to Practice was the theme of the inaugural Primary Care Conference on Managing Cardiovascular Disease in Primary Care which took place on Saturday 26th February in the Castlecourt Hotel in Westport. This conference was organised by Croí, the West of Ireland Cardiac Foundation in collaboration with Mayo Primary Community and Continuing Care as part of its ‘Heart Smart’ Mayo partnership.

This conference highlighted the pivotal role of primary care in the prevention and management of cardiovascular disease. The conference provided an opportunity for General Practitioners, Practice Nurses, Public Health Nurses, Dieticians, Physiotherapists, Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists and other health care professionals working in the areas of diabetes, stroke and coronary heart disease to network, and explore ways to achieve better outcomes for patients.

This inaugural meeting featured an outstanding conference programme and an excellent line up of speakers on many relevant topics relating to cardiovascular health such as diabetes, stroke, obesity, managing blood pressure and exercise prescription. This conference provided an opportunity for clinicians to share their knowledge and expertise in how best to improve primary health care provision and quality of care.

The forum was addressed by Dr. Joe Clarke, National Primary Care Clinical Lead, HSE, who shared his views on the role of General Practice and Primary Care in dealing with current and emerging health challenges. Ireland’s population is ageing and there is an increasing burden of chronic disease putting pressure on the health system. Dr. Clarke informed delegates about the new clinical care programmes being implemented nationally with plans to integrate and co-ordinate multidisciplinary team approaches to the management of chronic diseases in Primary Care.

Healthlink Pilot in Primary Care Teams

The National Primary Care ICT group continues to progress measures to address the needs of primary care in terms of IT developments. Agreement has been reached with Healthlink to pilot the use of this secure messaging system for referrals and generic messages between PCT members. At present only GPs have access to Healthlink but this pilot programme will allow PCT members to be issued with security certificates allowing web-based access to the system.

This project will enable health care professionals in primary care to refer securely and enable safe exchange of patient identifiable information. Secure electronic referrals will provide a major impetus to the development of Primary Care Teams and the provision of quality community based care. The project will trial the use of Healthlink by Primary Care Teams and provide a basis to identify barriers that need to be addressed before progressing further.

UPDATE OF Primary Care Events

“Heart Smart” Mayo Report Launched

As many as one in three adults over 40 years of age in Co. Mayo are obese, according to a report launched this week by Croí, the West of Ireland Cardiac Foundation, in collaboration with HSE West Mayo Primary Community and Continuing Care Department.

The report outlines the findings of a year long programme known as ‘Heart Smart’ Mayo, which is a nurse led community based cardiac risk factor screening programme. A total of 1,541 people availed of ‘free-of-charge’ cardiac screening and risk assessments, which found that almost half of the group (46%) were overweight, with a further 33% being classified as obese. This is a very significant finding says the report’s author, Ailish Houghlan, who points out that “a recent national survey (SLAN) found that 25% of the Irish population were obese, thus showing that the Mayo population are ahead of the national average”.

The ‘Heart Smart’ Mayo report also reveals startling findings across other risk factors for cardiovascular disease and stroke. Almost half (49%) of the participants had raised cholesterol (above the recommended levels) and 40% had raised blood pressure. In total, almost two thirds (64%) of all participants were referred to their general practitioner, with as many as 7% requiring urgent medical attention for either raised blood pressure or raised blood sugar levels. Taken together, the findings of this report show that as many as one in five Mayo people over the age of 40 are classified as ‘high risk’ for a fatal cardiovascular event such as heart attack or stroke.

The Croí ‘Heart Smart’ Programme was developed by local heart charity Croí in response to the clear need for a community based high-risk, early intervention programme. The ‘Heart Smart’ Mayo project is a collaboration between Croí and Mayo Primary Community and Continuing Care (PCCC) and, to date, the project has been supported by HSE Innovation funding and Croí.
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Further information or queries, please contact primarycare@hse.ie
Community Participation – North Sligo Primary Care Team

The North Sligo Primary Care Team held its first public meeting with a view to setting up a Community Health Forum. This PCT has previously held two very successful public information evenings, one specifically themed around Ageing with Health which covered topics around safety in the home, healthy eating and physical activity. The 2nd information evening covered family health issues and had topics including, cyber-bullying, speech & language in early development, MABS services and information on a community garden project.

The PCT was aware that there was no representatives from the Community on the team and felt that Community participation was essential to enable service users to participate in decisions about their health and to ensure that services are responsive to identified needs. The PCT decided to hold a public meeting with a view to establishing a Community Health Forum. Lots of information notices and invitations were distributed to local groups and this proved very worthwhile as over 40 local people turned up on the night. Presentations were given by one of the GP’s on the PCT about how the PCT has developed and what it involves. There was also a speaker from Comhairle na nOg who highlighted the importance of listening to the views of young people on health related matters. There was a very positive response from the participants around issues relating to their community and it proved very worthwhile in eliciting information from the participants. The participants were very positive about developing a forum as a result of the meeting and over 20 people signed up to attend a further meeting to establish the forum.

Ballyfermot New Facility

Right: Photo taken at the turning of the first sod event on the new Ballyfermot Primary Care and Mental Health Centre.

Front Row (L-R): Jim Curran, Assistant National Director Estates, Minister Mary Haney, Adrian Charles - Local Health Manager.

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Podiatry Services – Workforce Planning

In January 2007 the Ministers for Health and Children and Education and Science announced funding for a new degree programme and associated clinic for the education of Podiatrists in Ireland. The HSE West, in partnership with NUI Galway, were successful in their bid for the establishment of a National School of Podiatry on the NUIG campus and an associated Podiatry Clinic on the grounds of Merlin Park Hospital, Galway, to provide for the clinical education and training components of the programme.

This group will ensure that there is a service decision on the current/future requirements for Podiatrists to provide a service to the total population.

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There are 25 places available annually on the BSc (Hons) Programme and the first intake of students commenced in the academic year 2008-2009. The first cohort of students is due to graduate from the undergraduate programme in NUIG in 2012. A Working Group has been established, representative of Integrated Services, HR, OCCC, Therapy Professionals, School of Podiatry and Services, to complete a Workforce Planning Framework for Podiatry Services.

The empowerment and participation of service users has become a key element of government policy, and the need to listen and act on the views of service users, is an increasingly integral part of the planning and delivery of healthcare. Different levels of service user involvement exist on a continuum of participation including information, consultation, partnership, delegation and control. A guidance document has been developed by the National Advocacy Unit in the Quality and Clinical Care Directorate. It is the aim of the HSE that this document will be of value to all of those working to involve service users in the design, development and evaluation of health services. It provides an overview of the range of different methods available for service user involvement, practical examples and also presents a methods planning tool. The document is available at http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/vsya/SSULibrary/