



L-R: John Macgowan, Alasdair O'Doherty, Jessica Eagelton, Lisa Wilkins, Simon Nichols, Paul Stern, Prof. Des Breen, Jo Adams.

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New approach to cardiac patient care could save almost 20,000 lives and prevent 49,000 hospital admissions

Experts from Northumbria and Sheffield Hallam Universities will launch a new research project which aims to increase patient uptake of cardiac rehabilitation programmes as part of the NHS long-term plan.

Cardiac rehabilitation is a programme of exercise and lifestyle sessions offered to cardiac patients after they've had a cardiac event, such as a heart attack, heart surgery or diagnosis of a heart condition.

It is designed to help patients get back on their feet – both physically and mentally – after a cardiac event or procedure, and can involve exercise sessions, dietary advice, education about their condition, and psychological support. It also helps patients learn about their medication and factors such as high blood pressure, high blood sugar and high cholesterol that could increase the risk of future heart problems.

Currently, patients who have had a cardiac event are offered, in most parts of the UK, a ‘one size fits all’ rehabilitation package. Consequently, figures show that only 52% of people in the UK who are eligible for these services actually use them, and in many areas the figure is much lower. The NHS long-term plan is to increase uptake of support from 52% to 85% in the next 10 years.

The way that these services are currently offered might not appeal to everyone and may explain, in part, why uptake is currently at 52%. With an increase in uptake of services of just 5% (from 47%) in the last 10 years, it is apparent that the model needs to change.

It is estimated that by hitting this ambitious target of increasing uptake of services from 52% to 85% in the next 10 years, the new cardiac rehabilitation programme could save up to 19500 lives and prevent 49000 hospital admissions within the same period.

Now, researchers from Northumbria, Sheffield Hallam, the British Heart Foundation and Sheffield Teaching Hospitals have come together to understand which services patients would prefer to receive and how they would like to receive them.

Funded by the South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw Integrated Care System, the project will see the recruitment of 300 patients who are in hospital following a cardiac event, heart surgery or diagnosis of a new heart condition.

Using a sophisticated online questionnaire known as a ‘discrete choice experiment’, the team will seek to fully understand which cardiac rehabilitation services patients want to engage with and how. The questionnaire will be followed up with a number of interviews with patients.

The questionnaire is being designed by academics at Northumbria and Sheffield Hallam Universities, led by Dr Alasdair O’Doherty, Senior Lecturer in

Exercise Physiology and Health at Northumbria. Dr Simon Nichols, Senior Research Fellow in Exercise Physiology, will be the principal investigator who will lead the patient recruitment with his team at Sheffield Hallam University.

The information gathered from the project will then be used to help design a new rehabilitation programme aimed at increasing uptake and completion.

The goal is for the programmes to help more people from all socio-economic backgrounds to live longer, healthier lives following a cardiac event.

Dr Alasdair O'Doherty, explains: "Cardiac rehabilitation not only aims to help a person to recover from a heart problem, but it also seeks to prevent another cardiac event from occurring in the future. By using a discrete choice experiment, we will be able to identify which services are most important to each patient and develop a rehabilitation programme that improves secondary prevention of cardiovascular disease for a larger number of people."

The project will launch in April in hospitals across South Yorkshire and will run for six months.

A launch event was held yesterday, Tuesday 25 February, at Sheffield Hallam University's newly opened Advanced Wellbeing Research Centre, where all partners involved came together to discuss the project.

Professor Des Breen, Medical Director of South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw Integrated Care System said: "In South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw more than 1,000 people under the age of 75 die every year from Cardiovascular Disease, and it's the second biggest contributor to the gap in life expectancy between our population and England. This is the single biggest area where we can save lives over the next ten years.

"This is why we are funding innovative new research projects, like the cardiac rehabilitation programme, to see where we can make a long lasting difference in our local population. We are excited to see where the results will take us and see how they will contribute towards our wider ambitions of making people healthier, and live well, for longer."

Jo Adams, CVD Clinical Development Coordinator for Yorkshire and Humber

at the British Heart Foundation, which is collaborating on the research, said: "We welcome the opportunity to support this research which will provide greater insight into the support people need following a heart attack or new diagnosis.

"People living with heart and circulatory diseases need varying types of support which may range from dietary advice to guided exercise or psychological support. By involving them in the design and delivery of the programme we hope to improve the number of people attending cardiac rehabilitation and ultimately help them to live a fuller, longer and healthier life."

Notes to editors

This project has been funded by the South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw Integrated Care System through the Academic Health Science Network and is backed by the British Heart Foundation.

Photo caption - L-R: John Macgowan; Alasdair O'Doherty, Northumbria University; Jessica Eagelton, British Lung Foundation; Lisa Wilkins, South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw ICS; Simon Nichols, Sheffield Hallam University; Paul Stern, British Heart Foundation; Prof. Des Breen, South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw ICS; Jo Adams, British Heart Foundation.

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Northumbria is one of the largest universities in the UK with more than 30,000 students from over 130 countries

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Sheffield Hallam University's vision is to become the world's leading applied

university, transforming lives and creating opportunities for people from all backgrounds.

Named University of the Year for Teaching Quality in the Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2020, Sheffield Hallam is one of the UK's largest higher education providers, with over 30,500 students.

The University's research is characterised by a focus on real world impact - addressing the health, cultural, economic and social challenges facing society today.

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