

hearts4heart
2019

hearts4heart

hearts4heart 2019

hearts4heart

Supported by Australian and New Zealand cardiologists, hearts4heart is a health promotion charity and peak body that supports, educates and advocates for people living with heart disease, specialising in arrhythmias.

hearts4heart brings together patients and healthcare professionals with the shared goal to reduce the burden to heart patients. hearts4heart provides targeted educational programs, resources and services to improve the diagnosis, treatment and quality of life for people affected by heart disease. We achieve this through support, information, education, awareness/screening events and advocacy.

The primary goal of the organisation is to reduce preventable strokes and preventable deaths.

hearts4heart 2019 Summary and Achievements

hearts4heart has continued to increase its service offering, influence and advocacy in 2019.

AF Awareness Week

hearts4heart collaborated with The Asia Pacific Heart Rhythm Society (APHRS) to take part in an Asia Pacific awareness campaign to raise awareness of Atrial Fibrillation (AF) for the 5th year. The week was held from the 16-22 of September 2019. This year AF Awareness Week's key message to the public and in primary care was to raise awareness of the underutilisation of anticoagulants to prevent stroke: *"Preventing stroke in atrial fibrillation – It's a no-brainer"*

In 2019 we coordinated hospitals, pharmacies, GP clinics and rural communities to provide free screening for Atrial Fibrillation and provided resources, including posters developed in conjunction with our Medical Advisory Committee, our APP platform and screening devices. Hearts4heart worked with clinicians to develop a hearts4heart branded screening APP for AF Awareness Week to perform a ChA2DS2 VASc risk assessment score of developing AF and to screen for AF using a hand held ECG Device.

During the week we screened thousands of people and detected 11 people previously undiagnosed with AF, which now significantly reduces their risk of stroke. The event also provides the opportunity to have the conversation about the management of risk factors, recognising the symptoms and providing information on steps to take. As such we had a huge public response and profile raising of AF.

During AF Awareness Week, hearts4heart held two screening events in Federal Parliament House alongside the Parliamentary Committee of Friends of Heart and Stroke to raise the profile of Atrial Fibrillation and offer free screening to Politicians and staff. These events have made a huge impact and have supported our advocacy work in preventing stroke and ensuring patient access to therapies.

hearts4heart had a Channel 7 exclusive interview and were interviewed for radio and print media and appeared on over 100 radio stations in addition to national and local newspapers. We also ran a very successful social media awareness campaign and provide a toolkit to all screening sites.

Education

This year we have developed new patient information sheets and posters with the theme of *"Preventing stroke in atrial fibrillation – It's a no-brainer"* supported by a selection of highly relevant statistics around the importance of anticoagulants in preventing stroke, and a broader call to action for all audiences.

This development of the new materials was to raise awareness of the underutilisation of anticoagulants to prevent stroke as we work to improve the detection and management of AF in primary care. We encourage dialogue between healthcare professionals and patients so that the link between AF and stroke, the role of stroke prevention therapy, and management of AF risk factors are well understood. As such these materials were disseminated to GP clinics, pharmacies and hospitals.

The information sheets also outline key information about the detection and management of AF, stroke risk assessment, information on stroke prevention benefits outweighing bleeding risk to build confidence with anticoagulation initiation.

The Cardiac Society of Australia and New Zealand endorses hearts4heart on our educational materials, awareness campaigns and advocacy in Parliament.

Advocacy

hearts4heart have a productive working relationship with healthcare stakeholders and together we bring a single voice to ensure timely patient access to medical therapies. Through the work of this collaboration, in March 2019 Catheter Ablations for Atrial Fibrillation was listed on the Prostheses List after years of advocacy. The listing now enables patients to have access to the important treatment in Private Hospitals, therefore reducing the waiting list times in public hospitals. Hearts4heart is often invited to speak at various industry events and on panel discussions.

hearts4heart continues to have a strong presence in Cardiac Conferences including presenting at EP meetings both here and in New Zealand. hearts4heart are regularly called upon to by The Cardiac Society of Australia and New Zealand (CSANZ) to provide important feedback on various health policy reviews and seek guidance on Government engagement and other health priorities. hearts4heart were invited to join the Executive and sub-Committees to establish official Guidelines for AF. hearts4heart is also on the Steering Committee of the TGA device review other health related committees.

Support

Hearts4heart provides over the phone support, support through social media and facilitate face to face Heart Buddy Groups. In 2019 we have been building upon the Heart Buddy groups extending to regional areas.

hearts4heart engage with members on Facebook on specific heart conditions. We give patients the opportunity to ask questions and provide medically approved information on treatment options and management. Often patients forget to ask questions and it's a great opportunity to be educated on factors

they might not have considered. Other topics include: access to a medical professional; Medication adherence; Patients stories and linking likeminded people; success stories as well as the learning that can be taken away from the stories / what would they have done differently or changed; Rehabilitation; Nutrition; Exercise, fitness and heart disease; Anxiety, depression and heart disease and Support for partners and family

Buddy Program

Many patients who are newly diagnosed and have big decisions to make about their heart health often feel isolated and confused. One of the most powerful and most helpful role, is connecting patients with one another. Given the wide range of heart disease that exists, we assist with connecting patients with others who have or are going through a similar experience. This removes that isolation, helps them feel supported and enables patients to ask questions as they come to mind. Medical professionals don't always advise patients of what to expect prior to treatments or the emotional aspects, so connecting with other patients is valuable on many levels.

Hearts4heart Objectives

Our objective is to raise awareness of heart conditions to reduce preventable strokes and preventable deaths.

While we have come a long way in raising awareness, we still have a long way to go. Up to 80% of AF related strokes are preventable. These strokes are preventable if patients are diagnosed early and appropriately treated. There is significant underutilisation of anticoagulation in Australia and it is essential this is addressed.

AF Awareness Week is essential, not only for raising awareness to the general public but it is also essential to educate GP's and pharmacists on the importance of screening and the treatment for AF.

In 2020 we will continue our pharmacy and GP engagement and will work to build upon these relationships at both a state and national level. We view this as an opportune time following the Government's recent interest and focus on the growing epidemic of AF with screening, patient access to therapies and preventative measures to reduce the risk of stroke.

hearts4heart is also currently working towards facilitating many more screening events throughout the year within hospitals, pharmacies, GP clinics, rural communities and public locations to ensure early diagnoses and treatment for those suffering from AF. We are currently having discussions with Pharmacies to provide the screening ongoing throughout the year with the support of our MAC. We will continue to raise awareness on AF and promote and facilitate on going screening, to prevent AF related strokes and to ensure early diagnoses and treatment for AF.

We will also be working to improve the management of AF in primary care, through promotion and embedding into clinical practice of Australian treatment guidelines for AF; increased dialogue between healthcare professionals and patients so that the link between AF and stroke; the role of stroke prevention therapy, and management of AF risk factors are well understood; and increased medicine checks to improve adherence to anticoagulants.

In 2020 we will continue to increase our organisation's profile, services and reach through international AF awareness/screening events, improving AF detection, the management of AF in

Primary Care, involvement of cardiac reviews and conferences, public awareness, media campaigns and advocacy in Parliament.

Our programs are supported by a network of committees, program volunteers and key partnerships with organisations including CSANZ, Asia Pacific Heart Rhythm Society, Australian Medical Association, The Australian Cardiac Rehabilitation of Australia, Medical Technology Association of Australia, Pharmaceutical Society of Australia, The Pharmacy Guild, The Stroke Foundation, Cardiomyopathy Australia, HeartKids, The George Institute, the Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute and various hospitals, research teams and pharmacies across Australia.