



Atrial Fibrillation-Related Stroke Policy Series Workshop

The importance of pre-screening and early detection of AF to reduce the threat of stroke

25 January 2017
European Parliament

#ILoveMyBrain


■ SUMMARY

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■ AGENDA

- 10:00 – 10:30 Registration and welcome coffee
- 10:30 – 10:35 Frédéric Destrebecq, European Brain Council -
Welcome and brief introduction
- 10:35 – 10:40 MEP Aldo Patriciello – *Opening remarks*
- 10:40 – 10:55 Peter von Koskull, Stroke Survivor - *Life After Stroke*
- Questions & answers
- 11:00 – 11:10 Dr Bernard Deruyter, Cardiologist Europe Hospital Ste. Elisabeth
and Medical Centre of the European Parliament - *Atrial Fibrillation*
- Questions & answers
- 11:15 – 11:25 Trudie Lobban, AF Association & Arrhythmia Alliance - *Know Your Pulse*
- Questions & answers
- 11:30 – 11:40 Dr Prof. Didier Leys, European Academy of Neurology -
The Burden of Stroke
- Questions & answers
- 11:45 – 11:55 Dr Prof. Geert Vanhooren, European Stroke Organisation -
AF-Related Stroke
- Questions & answers
- 12:00 – 12:10 Dr Prof. Antonio Sparano, Neuromed & Albany Medical Center (USA) -
Case presentation: When the system works
- Questions & answers
- 12:15 – 13:00 Panel discussion led by Peter O'Donnell

■ EBC - Who we are

The European Brain Council (EBC) is a non-profit organization gathering patient associations, major brain-related societies as well as industries. Established in March 2002, its mission is to promote brain research in order to improve the quality of life of those living with brain disorders in Europe. 165 million Europeans are living with a brain disorder, causing a global cost (direct and indirect) exceeding 800 billion euros for the National Health budgets. EBC's main action areas are:

- Fostering cooperation with its member organizations
- Promoting dialogue between scientists, industry and society
- Interacting with the European Commission, the European Parliament and other relevant international institutions
- Raising awareness and promoting education on the brain
- Disseminating information about brain research and brain diseases in Europe.

In 2015, EBC organized a Year of the Brain, which included a number of events and activities surrounding brain health and brain disorder awareness. This included the introduction of the AF-related stroke policy series workshops, with previous workshops held in Liverpool, Rome, and Barcelona, and the final taking place today in Brussels.

Through this workshop, EBC and all partner organizations, aim to:

- Highlight the importance of screening for AF and broader understanding by medical practitioners on its importance - this would lead to better care for AF patients, better treatments guidelines and plans, and a reduction of stroke cases.
- Provide a forum for open discussion of all stakeholders in the issue (physicians, scientists/researchers, patients, policy makers, etc.) can work closer together to raise awareness to better screening, treatment and understanding of AF and AF related stroke.
- Encourage all sides of the AF-related field that screening and treatment are of utmost importance, and regulations and guidelines should be placed and followed.
- Recognize stroke as a social and economic burden, and that the costs can easily be controlled and decreased by reducing the number of strokes caused by AF.
- Be in alignment with the pilot actions calls within the Joint Action on Chronic Diseases management and prevention: currently discussed between Commission and Member States.
- Raise public awareness of the prevalence of Atrial Fibrillation, and the easy yet vital screening methods that exist to reduce the threat of stroke.

■ What is...

What is Atrial Fibrillation?

Atrial Fibrillation (AF) is the most common heart rhythm disturbance encountered by doctors. It can affect adults of any age, but it is more common as people get older. In the over 65-year-old age group, it affects about 10% of people. Atrial Fibrillation is not a life-threatening heart rhythm problem, but it can be troublesome and often requires treatment.

AF occurs when chaotic electrical activity develops in the upper chambers or atria. As a result, the atria no longer beat in an organised way, and pump less efficiently.

What is a Stroke?

A stroke is a brain attack. It happens when the blood supply to part of your brain is cut off. Blood carries essential nutrients and oxygen to your brain. Without blood your brain cells can be damaged or die. This damage can have different effects, depending on where it happens in your brain. A stroke can affect the way your body works as well as how you think, feel and communicate.

Most strokes are caused by a blockage cutting off the blood supply to the brain. This is an ischaemic stroke. However, strokes can also be caused by a bleeding in or around the brain. This is a haemorrhagic stroke¹.

Why AF-Related Stroke?

18% of strokes are associated with AF—the most common heart rhythm disturbance. Every 15 seconds someone suffers an AF-related stroke. AF is the most powerful single risk factor for suffering a deadly or debilitating stroke.

The irregular rhythm of the heart caused by AF gives opportunity for the blood to pool and form into a clot. It is these clots that are at risk of breaking away and flowing through the blood until they cause a blockage and thus an ischaemic stroke (clot caused stroke).

While it is currently not possible to prevent all AF-related strokes, research and increased understanding has enabled doctors to:

- assess an individual's risk of an AF-related stroke, and
- prescribe a therapy that will reduce this risk by up to 70%.

The early detection of previously unknown arrhythmias, such as AF, can enable patients to receive timely and effective diagnosis and treatment in order to avoid possible future onset of stroke².

¹ Stroke Association, <https://www.stroke.org.uk/what-stroke/what-stroke>

² AF Association, <http://www.heartrhythmalliance.org/afa/uk/af-related-stroke>

■ Speakers Biographies



MEP Aldo Patriciello has been a Member of the European Parliament since 2009. He is part of European People’s Party group, and a member of the Committees on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) and Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI).

@PatricielloAldo



Frédéric Destrebecq has been the Executive Director of the European Brain Council since October 2014. Prior to this position, he served at the European Union of Medical Specialists (UEMS) as Chief Executive Officer, and previously as Director for European Affairs. Frédéric holds a Master Degree in Political Science and International Relations from the Université Catholique de Louvain (Belgium). He also studied at the Institut d’Etudes Politiques (Paris) and University of Wales College (Cardiff), in the framework of the former EU Socrates exchange programme.

@BrusselsDC



Peter O’Donnell is an EU-accredited Brussels-based journalist who has been covering European and international affairs for over twenty years. He has worked for The Financial Times, The Sunday Times, Reuters, the Economist Intelligence Unit, UPI, Euronews, and many other media in Europe and beyond. He is a former editor-in-chief of Europe Information Service, a former associate editor of European Voice and of Politico, and is a contributing writer to Politico in Brussels, APM Europe in London and Applied Clinical Trials in the USA. In addition to his work as a journalist, he acts as editor, editorial adviser and speechwriter for numerous clients in the corporate, political and academic world. He frequently chairs EU-level policy debates and lectures on EU affairs.

@podeuropa



Peter von Koskull, a stroke survivor, active in the Finnish Brain Association, travels throughout Finland providing educational presentations, developing peer support initiatives, and fundraising on behalf of stroke survivors and their families. At age 63, a stroke left Mr. von Koskull with severe aphasia. Prior to his stroke, he had a lengthy career in international marketing for Finnish industry. For over a decade, he served as the Finnish Trade Commissioner in Germany. Mr. von Koskull’s experiences from aphasia inspired him to pursue his current occupation as a “Stroke Ambassador”.



Dr. Bernard Deruyter, MD is a Cardiologist at the Europe Hospital Ste. Elisabeth and Cardiology Consultant at the Medical Centre of the European Parliament in Brussels, Belgium. He has held fellowships in Cardiac Electrophysiology at Columbia University in the City of New York and the Academisch Ziekenhuis in Maastricht. Since 2010, Dr. Deruyter has been Coordinator for the “Rhythmic Clinic” in Brussels Europe Hospitals.



Trudie Lobban MBE, FRCP, is the founder of the AF Association (Atrial Fibrillation Association), an international charity working to provide information, support and access to established, new or innovative treatments for Atrial Fibrillation (AF). The AF Association has been an integral resource to patients with AF since its establishment in 2007, through has led various international initiatives including the ‘Know Your Pulse’ campaign, parliamentary launches, patient & medical literature in numerous languages and the AF Aware Campaign. Trudie also established the Arrhythmia Alliance in 2004, which has brought about national change in the improvement and delivery of arrhythmia services throughout the UK.

@tcastl



Didier Leys, MD, PhD is Professor of Neurology at the University of Lille. He is past president of the European Stroke Organisation, of the French Stroke Society, and of the French Society of Neurology. He is currently Secretary General of the European Academy of Neurology. He has authored 576 publications and book chapters. His main topics of interest are acute stroke, pre- and post-stroke dementia, and factors predisposing to cervical artery dissections. He is reviewer for many journals with high impact factors such as Lancet, Lancet Neurology etc., has been member of the editorial board of Stroke and is currently vice-editor of the *European Stroke Journal*.



Prof. Dr. Geert Vanhooren is a Senior Stroke Neurologist and Head of the Department of Neurology at AZ Sint-Jan Brugge-Oostende. Throughout his career, he has worked on the implementation of local stroke unit care and within a stroke care network regionally. On a national level within Belgium, as the President of the Belgian Stroke Council, he has worked to promote and organize stroke care. Furthermore, on a wider European level, he is involved in the activities of the European Stroke Organisation as both a committee member and chair. Prof. Vanhooren also lectures at a number of schools and universities, and sits on a wide selection of academic and government advisory boards.

@GeertTVanhooren



Dr. Antonio Sparano is the Director of the Stroke Unit at Neuromed Ircs Pozzilli and a Clinical Associate Professor of Neurology at Albany Medical Center at the College of Albany in Albany, New York, USA. His particular fields of interest are Stroke, Acute Neurology (In-Patient Service and Consultation) as well as Epilepsy.

■ Partner Organizations



In October 2004, 20 patient groups from across Europe joined forces and formed SAFE, the Stroke Alliance for Europe. SAFE is a non-profit-making organisation that represents a range of stroke patient groups from across Europe. Their mutual goal is to drive stroke prevention up the European political agenda and prevent the incidence of stroke through education. SAFE's goals are to help prevent stroke-related death and disability throughout Europe by raising awareness both among the general public and the medical community on the link between stroke and hypertension, as well as other important contributing risk factors for stroke.

@StrokeEurope



The European Stroke Organisation (ESO) is a pan-European society of stroke researchers and physicians, national and regional stroke societies and lay organisations that was founded in December 2007. The ESO is an NGO comprised of individual and organisational members.

The aim of the ESO is to reduce burden of stroke by changing the way that stroke is viewed and treated. The ESO provides assistance in achieving this goal and in harmonising stroke management across the whole of Europe and taking action to reduce the burden of stroke regionally and globally.

@ESOstroke



The European Academy of Neurology (EAN) is a non-profit organisation that unites and supports neurologists across the whole of Europe. The European Academy of Neurology (EAN) is a Society of National Neurological Societies and at the same time a Society of individual members. The purpose of is to promote "Excellence in Neurology in Europe".

Currently, 45 European national neurological societies as well as 800 individuals are registered members of the EAN. Thus, the EAN represents more than 20,000 European neurologists.

@EANeurology



Atrial Fibrillation Association (AFA) is a UK registered charity which focuses on raising awareness of atrial fibrillation (AF) by providing information and support materials for patients and medical professionals involved in detecting, diagnosing and managing atrial fibrillation.

AF Association works closely with medical professionals, Department of Health, government, NHS Trusts, strategic health authorities, patients, carers, patient support group members and allied groups.

@AtrialFibUK



A-A is a coalition of charities, patient groups, patients, carers, medical groups and allied professionals. Although these groups remain independent, they work together under the A-A umbrella to promote timely and effective diagnosis and treatment of arrhythmias.

@KnowYourPulse



■ Acknowledgement

This event is supported by **Pfizer Limited** and **Bristol-Myers Squibb**



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