

Buckinghamshire Hospitals TIA Service

We are writing to you about **important changes to our services** for patients with transient ischaemic attack (TIA) at Buckinghamshire Hospitals NHS Trust.

As you know certain patients with TIA are at high risk of stroke within the next two weeks and this risk can be accurately predicted using a simple clinical score (ABCD²). Prompt medical treatment (with an anti-platelet agent, statin and anti-hypertensive) and early carotid surgery (for those with carotid stenosis) can reduce the stroke risk by up to 80% in the next month. As a result the national guidelines for TIA management, incorporated in the Department of Health's Vital Signs, mandate treatment of high-risk TIA patients within 24 hours and lower risk patients within 7 days.

A key part of the national strategy is specialist assessment and treatment of high risk TIA patients within 24 hours of their event (high risk is defined as an ABCD² score of 4 or more). Patients with recurrent TIAs, atrial fibrillation, known carotid stenosis, uncontrolled hypertension (BP>180/110), prosthetic heart valves and those already on anticoagulant therapy should also be considered as high risk.

In future, as soon as you see such a patient, please complete the **TIA referral form (attached to this letter)** and send the patient to the Emergency Department at Stoke Mandeville or Wycombe Hospital (please note that if a patient presents more than a week from their event, they need no longer be considered urgent, as the highest risk period has passed).

We will see the patients ourselves, either that day or the next day at one of the Day Hospitals. The assessment there will include review by a Stroke Specialist Nurse with a MRI brain scan and other investigations if indicated. Appropriate medication will be given to the patient that day. We aim to avoid admission for TIA patients but this will be necessary when no stroke consultant is available or if required clinically.

Lower risk patients should be referred directly for a neurovascular clinic appointment and we are streamlining the referral process to make this easier for all.

We enclose copies of all relevant documentation, including a reminder about the ABCD² score. The **policy** and **pathway** documents contain important details such as the fax numbers.

With effect from Monday 13th July, please would you:

- use the ABCD² score in assessing patients with suspected TIA
- send those patients with a score of 4 or more directly to the Emergency Department with the completed proforma (please fax the proforma to the ED as well)
- refer those with a score of 3 or less to clinic (please fax the proforma to the office)
- start aspirin 300mg daily immediately **unless the patient has persistent symptoms or signs**
- advise the patient not to drive

We would be very happy to discuss these changes with you and we hope to make a number of practice visits in the near future.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely

Dr Dennis Briley
Dr Matthew Burn
Dr Chris Durkin
Dr Matthew Jackson

9-Jul-09