



**LEADING DOCTORS CALL ON GOVERNMENT TO STOP
'DRAGGING THEIR FEET'
AND INCLUDE A MAIN CAUSE OF CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE IN PROPOSED
SCREENING PROGRAMME**

Embargoed until 00.01; 3 July 2008 – The lives of people with a common and serious form of cardiovascular disease – Peripheral Arterial Disease (PAD) – may be at risk due to under-treatment of this poorly recognised condition. A new report, which has today been sent to MPs, highlights for the first time the healthcare, political, social and economic costs of failing to provide appropriate treatment to those diagnosed with PAD.

Target PAD, the group of leading experts behind the report titled *Dragging Their Feet*, is calling for the Government to urgently address this. Target PAD want to see the ankle brachial index, a simple test to diagnose PAD risk, alongside current cardiovascular indicators proposed for inclusion within the cardiovascular screening remit.

Professor Jill Belch, Professor of Vascular Medicine at the Institute of Cardiovascular Research, University of Dundee, and Professor Gerry Stansby, Professor of Vascular Surgery at the Freeman Hospital, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, Target PAD chairs, comment: “PAD patients are disadvantaged by being both under-diagnosed and under-treated. Failure to include PAD within the cardiovascular screening programme will further prevent these patients receiving the quality of care offered to their counterparts: patients with angina and stroke.”

Along with heart disease and stroke, PAD is the third form of atherosclerosis. Atherosclerosis is the main underlying cause of cardiovascular disease¹, the UK's number one killer². Unlike heart attacks or stroke, PAD remains relatively unrecognised and as a result, is inadequately diagnosed and treated by comparison.

Sub-optimal treatment of PAD also has a number of potential severe effects for patients which include:³

- Greater risk of a serious or fatal cardiovascular event
- Greater risk of illness and incapacity
- Greater risk of financial costs relating to incapacity, which could reach many thousands of pounds a year
- A dramatic reduction in the patient's quality of life, and those of the patient's family/carers



The report claims that if PAD continues to be neglected, unnecessary costs to the NHS will continue. Based only on tariff payments for a small cohort of PAD patients, the NHS currently endures unnecessary costs of at least £47million per year, with the cost to the UK economy as a whole standing between £100 million to £600 million per year³.

Dr Sarah Jarvis, London GP and Target PAD board member comments: "There is a huge and convincing evidence base for the high risk of cardiovascular disease associated with PAD. People with PAD are three to four times more likely to die from a stroke or heart attack than people of the same age who do not have PAD. Despite this, they are currently not targeted for high quality preventive care in the same way as patients with coronary heart disease, stroke or hypertension. If doctors are to meet government targets by reducing deaths from cardiovascular disease by at least two fifths in people under 75 by 2010, PAD must be recognised as a significant health burden and its exclusion would be completely illogical."

The Target PAD committee was disappointed that PAD was once again missed out of the Quality and Outcomes Framework (QoF) along with other clinical indicators for serious clinical conditions, despite the General Practitioners Committee recommending it be one of the three most important areas which should have been included at this years QoF update.

Target PAD believes the inclusion of PAD within the cardiovascular screening programme would be an investment that will not only save many lives, but also save the NHS many millions of pounds in the future.

Notes to Editors

Target PAD Mission Statement

"Target PAD is a group of lay persons and professionals who are dedicated to abolishing health inequality for patients with peripheral arterial disease (PAD). We believe that PAD is an important and common condition, which is currently under-diagnosed and under-treated in the UK. We believe there is an urgent need for change such that PAD patients can benefit from existing, proven therapies which are already being offered to patients with coronary heart disease and stroke. Our mission is to bring this about by improving education and awareness of patients, health professionals and policy makers, resulting in PAD being given an appropriate proportion of health service resources and funding in both secondary and primary care."

www.targetpad.co.uk



Target PAD members

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The Target PAD group is supported by the Circulation Foundation, The Vascular Society and the British Cardiac Patients Association and is sponsored by sanofi-aventis and Bristol Myers-Squibb.

How can practitioners help?

Health care practitioners can support Target PAD's activities by writing to PADcampaigning@hhealth.com for further information.

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References:

1. Lusis AJ. Atherosclerosis. Nature 2000;407:233-41.
2. British Heart Foundation Statistics Website. Accessed April 2008
<http://www.heartstats.org/datapage.asp?id=713>
3. Target PAD. Dragging Their Feet. April 2008