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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Clinics set to revolutionise care and pathways for heart failure patients**

TWO new clinics have been set up which could revolutionise the treatment of patients with heart failure.

The Lancashire Cardiac Centre, part of Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, is working with GPs to provide them with fast track referral routes for patients to the newly revised heart failure clinic and a one-stop diagnostic service.

The one-stop diagnostic clinic will offer patients a confirming heart scan, provide them with education and explanation of the diagnosis and a plan of what will happen next all in one session meaning the majority of patients will only attend hospital on one occasion.

They will have their subsequent management guided by specialists but actually supervised much closer to home in the community. Those with more complex diseases, those who do not respond to first line therapy and those felt to be high risk will be offered hospital based specialist follow up.

Consultant Cardiologist Dr Alison Seed, who has set up the clinics, said: "New National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidance has recently been published and we now have a very clear Gold Standard for the care of patients with heart failure. The great news is that the services we have put in place over the last two years in the Cardiac Centre, already meet the NICE standard and there are very few centres in the UK who are in this position. We are working closely now with GPs to ensure that all patients are offered this high standard of care."

She added: "Nationally it is recognised that the diagnosis of heart failure often comes too late in the course of the disease and that best care is not always offered. In 2007 the Healthcare Commission carried out a detailed investigation into the problem and highlighted two key factors. Firstly that diagnosis needs to be made at the earliest opportunity, often when the patient only reports mild breathlessness or even before symptoms develop. Secondly, that patients also need specialist assessment at an earlier stage in their disease. Several years later the NICE guideline finally gives clear priority to these two aspects of care."

Dr Seed is now encouraging GPs to check BNP (B type natriuretic peptide), a simple blood test, in any patient that reports unexplained breathlessness, in

accordance with the NICE guideline. BNP is a hormone released during stress to the heart. Depending on the result of the blood test further investigation ideally through the specialist services offered in Blackpool, can be arranged.

Dr Seed continued: “Importantly patients diagnosed with heart failure are most often managed by medication alone, the result being improvement in symptoms and perhaps most importantly defence against deterioration.

“Without appropriate treatments too many patients come to the attention of specialists only when they are seriously unwell, requiring admission to hospital. Around 10 people per week are admitted as an emergency to Blackpool Victoria Hospital with heart failure and 40% of those will be readmitted within six months for further treatment. It is hoped that these new clinics and care pathways will reduce the numbers of patients being admitted.

“We want to urge anyone who has become aware of shortness of breath to seek advice from their GP.”

Both the diagnostic and the specialist follow up clinics have this week been added to Choose and Book which means that any patient, meeting the referral criteria, can choose to be seen by the services at Blackpool by making a request through their GP.



PIC: Consultant Cardiologist Dr Alison Seed.

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