



MEDIA RELEASE

Leading heart charity and clinicians call for the NHS to transform patient care in heart disease

BCPA launches the UK's first Cardiovascular Patients Bill of Rights

January 14, 2009, Westminster – The UK's first *Cardiovascular Patients Bill of Rights* was launched today by the British Cardiac Patients Association (BCPA) to sit alongside the NHS Constitution, in a bold move to highlight the needs of heart disease patients around the UK and to fight for a standardised level of care to be delivered by the NHS.

Members of Parliament, clinicians and patients gathered at the Houses of Parliament today to call for the NHS to overhaul its cardiovascular patient care standards in line with the Bill's recommendations.

The Government is set to miss targets for reducing inequalities in circulatory disease (which includes heart attack and stroke) while death rates from heart disease still remain higher in the UK than in much of western Europe (including France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Sweden and Iceland)¹. Therefore today's call for action comes just in time for many.

The publication of the Bill has been welcomed by clinicians, such as Professor Michael Kirby, Visiting Professor to the Faculty of Health and Human Sciences at the University of Hertfordshire, who has also worked as a GP, on several NHS advisory boards, and as editor of the *Primary Care Cardiovascular Journal (PCCJ)*.

"We have long been in need of a benchmark such as this Bill to help cardiovascular patients understand the level of care they should expect, and to help Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) identify where they are falling short in providing these fundamental patient rights", said Professor Kirby. "We are delighted to see the BCPA take the initiative in providing what should prove to be both an important reference for cardiac patients in England and an invaluable tool for clinicians and commissioners as they strive towards improving cardiovascular care".

The Bill introduces five fundamental patient rights which form the basis for transforming patient care for cardiovascular patients. The five rights include:

1. The right to effective primary care management (ongoing assistance from GPs and practice nurses)

2. The right to early intervention (acting fast with the right treatments)
3. The right to the best treatment
4. The right to joined up support and care (healthcare professionals and organisations working together to deliver the best patient outcomes)
5. The right to holistic risk assessment

Eve Knight, Development Advisor and Life Member of the BCPA, said provision of the patients rights included in the Bill will translate into huge improvements in the current standard of cardiovascular care.

Ms Knight commented, "The BCPA encourages all PCTs and relevant clinicians to review the Bill and take immediate action to meet all of the targets outlined. We will be working with the NHS and PCTs across the UK to measure the impact of the Bill and ensure a new level of accountability for cardiovascular care".

"Heart disease is the UK's largest cause of death, and death rates remain higher in this country than in similar healthcare systems across Europe. It's crucial the Bill is taken up – it is a genuine milestone in our pursuit of improved outcomes for heart patients in the UK, we simply can't afford to ignore it," Ms Knight concluded.

- Ends -

To arrange an interview with a cardiovascular patient or with Eve Knight of the BCPA, or for any further information, please contact:

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Notes to editors

Diseases of the heart and circulatory system (cardiovascular disease or CVD) are the main cause of death in the UK, accounting for almost 198,000 deaths (35% of all deaths) each year. The main forms of CVD are coronary heart disease and stroke².

The BCPA (formerly known as “The Zipper Club”) is an independent non-profit making organisation run by volunteers and established to provide support reassurance and advice to cardiac patients and their carers.

Sanofi-aventis and Bristol-Myers Squibb have jointly supported the development of the BCPA Bill of Rights through a grant for publication and through providing editorial input to the final document, and the funding of public relations activities to publicise the Bill of Rights. The view and opinions expressed in the Cardiovascular Patients’ Bill of Rights are those of the British Cardiac Patients Association only.

For more information about the BCPA, please visit www.bcpa.co.uk

REFERENCES

¹ Allender S, et al, *European cardiovascular disease statistics, 2008 edition* British Heart Foundation: London. 2008

² Allender S, et al, *Coronary heart disease statistics*. British Heart Foundation: London. 2008