

Know your pulse awareness campaign: involving pharmacists for greater outreach

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1. Background and Objectives

Atrial Fibrillation (AF) is a common heart arrhythmia encountered in practice and a major risk factor for stroke, contributing to one in five strokes^{1,2}. In England, it has been estimated to affect 1.36 million people with half a million currently living with the condition undetected³.

As part of the Global AF awareness week (21st to 27th November 2016), International Pharmacists for Anticoagulation Care Taskforce (iPACT) created a partnership with Atrial Fibrillation Association (AFA) to test a model where pharmacists across the globe become actively involved in raising AF awareness and provide pulse rhythm checks amongst the general population.

2. Methods

A cross sectional study conducted by pharmacists across five countries: Canada, New Zealand, Portugal, Spain and England, during 21st to 27th November 2016.

Primary care pharmacists from Southwark Clinical Commissioning Group organised a one day AF pulse awareness event as part of the global campaign at the workplace.

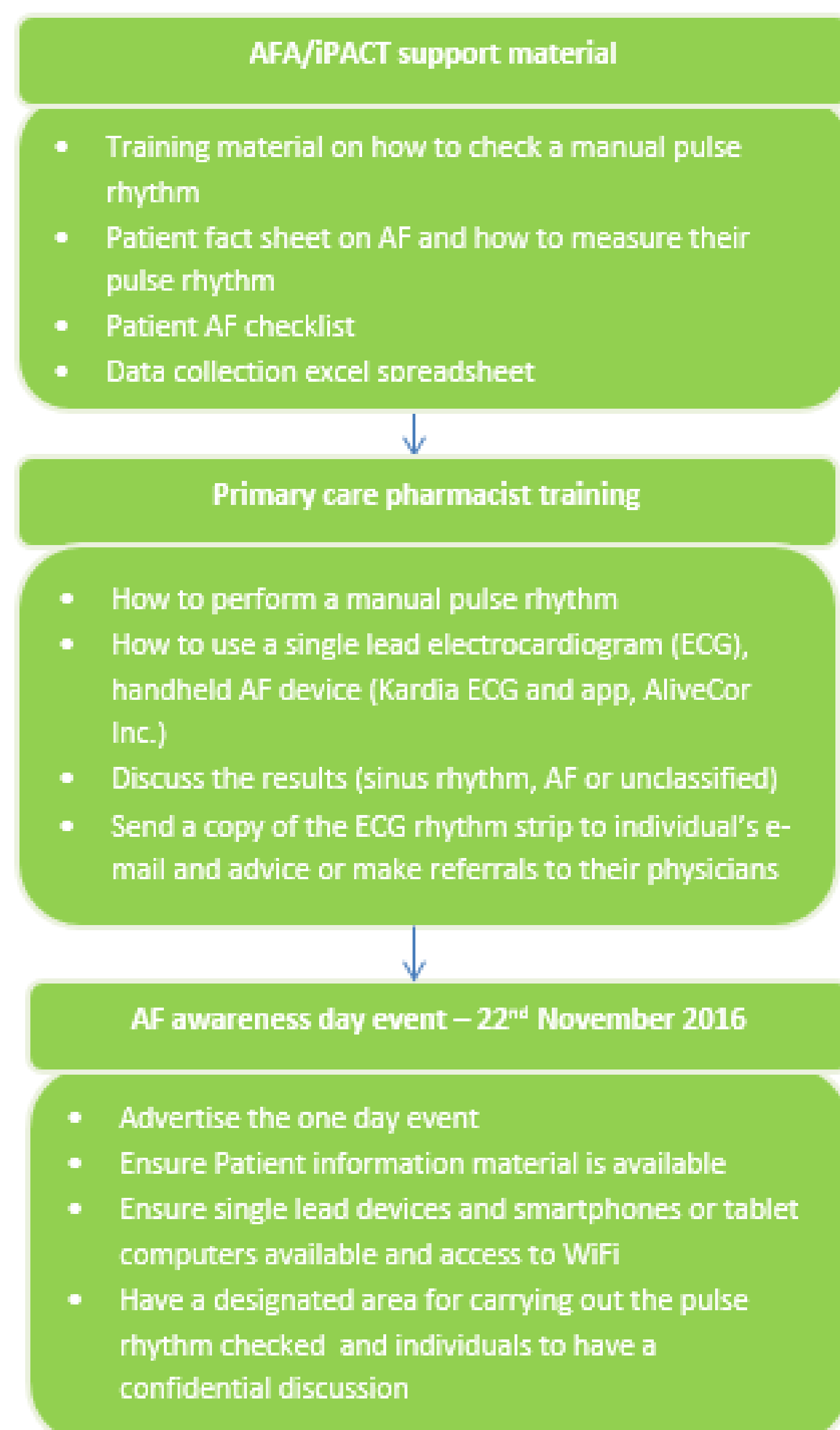


Figure 1. Summary of steps for AF awareness campaign

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3. Results

Data are available from the Southwark event, during which 182 individuals were shown how to check their own pulse rhythm, educated and screened for AF. The outcome of the screening is summarised in figure 2. Those with an AF or unclassified result were provided with a copy of their ECG by e-mail and were referred to their physician.

Table 1. Characteristics of individuals (n=182)

Age - years	
• Mean	47
• Range	21-72
Female sex – number (%)	105 (58%)
Heart rate – bpm	
• Mean	79
• Range	51-128

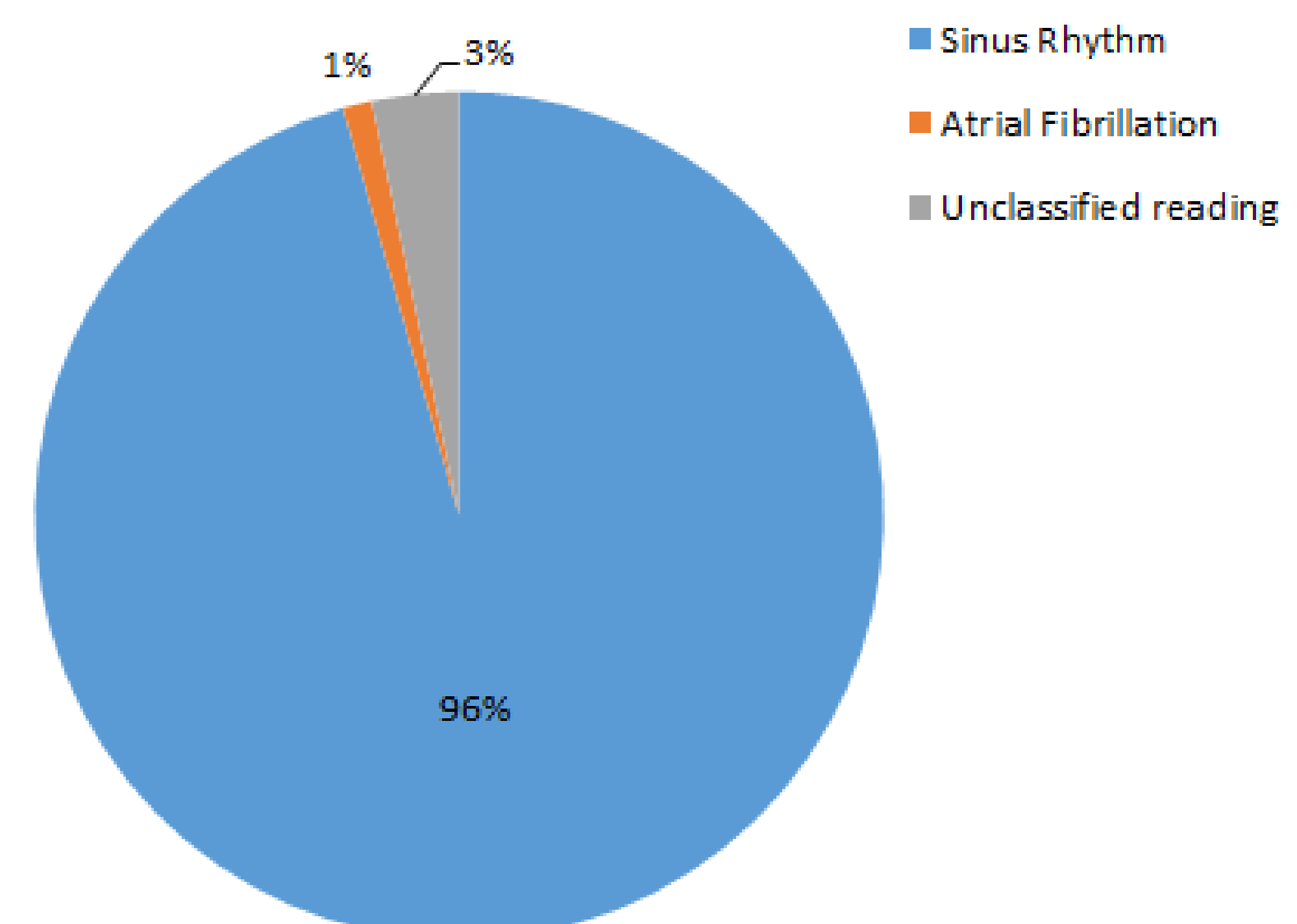


Figure 2. Outcome of pulse rhythm check using a single lead handheld AF detection device

5. Discussion and conclusion

The rate of AF detection during the one day event substantiates results of a recent meta-analysis: the number needed to screen to detect one individual with undiagnosed AF for general population is 100⁴.

For a successful campaign, pharmacists require adequate training on AF, on performing manual pulse rhythm checks and using detection devices.

AF awareness campaigns undertaken by pharmacists in primary care could make a major contribution to addressing undiagnosed AF across the globe.

References

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