Guidelines to reduce mortality following MI

Guidelines to help reduce the number of premature deaths by improving care for those who have suffered a heart attack have been updated by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE).

The guidance provides advice to offer patients about physical activity, smoking and other aspects of lifestyle.

The guidance also expands on previous recommendations for cardiac rehabilitation services and recommends that patients should be considered for a cardiological assessment to identify those that may benefit from heart surgery.

British Heart Foundation cardiac specialist nurse, Anne White, said: ‘This guidance will help empower cardiac rehabilitation teams to provide equitable, patient-centred rehab programmes. It should inspire innovative ways in which the teams can engage with an extensive range of healthcare professionals involved with people who have had an MI.’

Call for NHS to supply free continence pads

Older people cut their continence pads in half to make supplies last longer, a survey by Help the Aged has found. The charity called on primary care trusts to ensure that everyone who needs continence pads receives them free from the NHS.

Local authorities should place greater emphasis on the provision and upkeep of public toilets, the charity has said.

In a survey of older people, the charity found 80 per cent of respondents said it was difficult to find a public toilet when they needed one. The charity says the closure of public toilets contributes to this problem, making older people feel isolated by their condition.

Being incontinent is second only to dementia as the reason why older people move into residential care. One in ten people over 65 has involuntary bladder contractions, with 15 per cent who still live at home suffering with faecal incontinence.

The charity has also published new qualitative research that shows there is a considerable link between incontinence and social isolation among older people. The research highlights how embarrassment about the condition prevents many older people seeking help from either professionals or family.

One older woman told researchers that she could not bring herself to tell her husband she had faecal incontinence.

A Help The Aged spokesperson said: ‘We have the very British taboo of bodily functions, yet incontinence is not an inevitable part of ageing and we need much more research into the causes, prevention and treatment of it.’

Single-use wash bowls help reduce the risk of infection

Nurses have stopped using plastic washbowls in Trafford General Hospital in a bid to fight infections.

The hospital is one of the first in the country to introduce the new single-use Vernaclean washbowl. This is the first medical pulp product capable of holding both soap and warm water and it is maceratable after use.

Jay Turner-Gardner, infection control specialist nurse, who led the Trafford four-week evaluation, said: ‘The concept of a single-use wash bowl is excellent as it rules out the risk of cross infection from re-used plastic wash bowls and ensures that every patient gets a clean bowl every time. It also eliminates the time nurses spend trying to effectively clean and dry plastic wash bowls between uses.’

In brief

The Foundation of Nursing Studies (FoNS) is offering funding of up to £5000 to two project teams that are committed to working with older people. The funding will help nurses who promote independence and choice for older people towards the goal of healthy ageing. The closing date for applications is June 8. For more details go to: www.fons.org/ahcp/funding.asp

Help the Aged is calling for the government to raise awareness of falls prevention and the importance of exercise for the health of older people, following new research to support national falls awareness day on June 26. The research shows that 5.3 million over 65s are unaware that exercise can prevent falls. A further 3.4 million have not taken exercise for a year or could not remember the last time they had exercise.

Alzheimer’s drugs will be the subject of the first High Court challenge of a decision by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) this month. The hearing is due to commence on June 25 and last four days. The unprecedented judicial review follows a two year battle over whether people in the early stages of Alzheimer’s disease should have access to the only effective drugs to treat the debilitating illness on the NHS. The drugs cost just £2.50 a day.

Up to 10 per cent of men aged 65 and 79 have abdominal aortic aneurysms but do not know it. If their weakened arteries burst they stand a very high risk of dying. Ultrasound screening of men in this age group can significantly reduce the number who die from this condition.

Cochrane researchers performed a systematic review of 128,000 men and found that men in this age group benefited from screening.