



PRESS RELEASE

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GHA LAUNCHES AORTIC ANEURYSM SCREENING PROGRAMME

The GHA is pleased to announce the commencement of a new Screening Programme to detect Aneurysms of the Abdominal Aorta from 1st March 2015.

This Programme aims to detect Aneurysms of the Abdominal Aorta in older men, who have a higher risk of this condition, which can be fatal if not detected and treated in time.

The aorta, which is the largest blood vessel in the human body, carries blood from the heart downwards through the chest and the abdomen. It is under constant pressure and in about 6-9% of older men, the wall of the aorta in the abdomen can become weak and start to expand or bulge like a balloon, forming what is called an 'Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm'. The condition is rare in women and younger men. Aneurysms can rupture suddenly as a catastrophic event, with less than 20% surviving after a rupture. If detected by Screening and operated at the optimal time, survival is around 97%.

Screening involves a painless, non-invasive ultrasound examination that will take about 10 minutes. It will be offered to all GHA entitled men around their 65th birthday by an appointment invitation. The test is a one-off and will not need to be repeated, unless an aneurysm is found. If an aneurysm is found, the test will be repeated at regular intervals to check if the aneurysm is expanding and meanwhile, the person's general health will be monitored by his GP, who will also offer advice on slowing the growth of the aneurysm. If



surgery becomes necessary, this will be arranged in a specialist centre as a GHA sponsored patient.

The GHA has produced leaflets in both English and Spanish explaining the programme and will be sending these along with the appointment invitation.

Although Abdominal Aortic Aneurysms are rare conditions, the Screening Programme will aim to ensure that no one in Gibraltar has to suffer a catastrophic rupture. The GHA therefore asks all men who receive the invitation to take the matter seriously and undertake this simple test.

Minister for Health Dr John Cortes, said, "This is another of the new initiatives the GHA is embarking on in order to pre-empt acute illness and save lives. The GHA team has once again pulled together across disciplines to deliver this most important screening programme. Together with the recent developments in mental health and in employment matters it shows the dynamism with which we are working."