This release by Information Services Division provides an annual update on the Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm (AAA) screening programme in Scotland. This programme aims to reduce the number of deaths caused by abdominal aneurysms in men aged 65 and over.

Main Points

In Scotland in the year ending 31 March 2019:

- More than 8 in 10 men took up the invitation for abdominal aortic aneurysm screening (84.5% uptake).
- Over 25,800 men were tested through the routine programme and an aneurysm was detected in 303 men (1.2%).
- Most aneurysms identified through the screening programme were small (84%), followed by medium (11%) and large (5%).
- Uptake of screening was lower in the more deprived areas (most deprived 76.7%; least deprived 90.0%).
- The essential threshold was met nationally in 9 of the 12 performance indicators for the screening programme.
Background

An Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm is a swelling of the aorta, the main artery in the body, as it passes through the abdomen. The condition is most common in men aged 65 and over and usually there are no symptoms. Large aneurysms are uncommon but can be very serious. As the wall of the aorta stretches, it becomes weaker, and it can rupture (burst). If the aneurysm ruptures, this leads to life-threatening internal bleeding and, in 8 out of 10 cases, death.

Men aged 65 are sent an invitation to attend screening. Men over 65 years of age, who have not been screened previously, can self-refer into the screening programme. The test is a simple ultrasound scan of the abdomen. Most men have a normal result and are discharged from the screening programme. Men with detected small or medium aneurysms are invited for regular scans to monitor the size of the aneurysm. Men with large aneurysms are at high risk of aneurysm rupture and are referred to vascular specialist services for assessment and to discuss treatment options.

The Scottish AAA screening programme has 12 Key Performance Indicators it uses to help assess the performance of the screening programme. Each indicator has an essential and a desirable threshold. The essential threshold is the minimum level of performance the screening programme is expected to meet.

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Further Information

Find out more from the full report and the data that is available to download from our web page. For more information on AAA Screening see the AAA Screening section of our website. The next release of this publication will be in March 2021.

ISD and Official Statistics

Information Services Division (ISD) is the principal and authoritative source of statistics on health and care services in Scotland. ISD is designated by legislation as a producer of ‘Official Statistics’. Our official statistics publications are produced to a high professional standard and comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics. Further information about our statistics.