

Unexplained Severe Pain?

# THINK AORTA

Aortic Dissection is an emergency that is often fatal when missed

CT Scan for a definitive diagnosis

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## **PATIENTS CAMPAIGN TO SAVE LIVES BY IMPROVING THE DIAGNOSIS OF AORTIC DISSECTION**

**A national poster campaign, launched today, aims to save lives among the 4,000 people in the UK and Ireland affected by a life-threatening Aortic Dissection every year. Aortic Dissection is a tearing of the main artery that carries blood from the heart to the rest of the body. It is a medical emergency, which is often fatal when missed. Patient Association, Aortic Dissection Awareness (UK & Ireland), says that a diagnosis of Aortic Dissection is considered in less than half of patients who arrive at A&E with the condition and that one-third of patients with Aortic Dissection are actively treated in the Emergency Department for a different, incorrect diagnosis. The only way to definitively diagnose Aortic Dissection is by a CT scan.**

A patient-led campaign has resulted in this week's distribution of 'Think Aorta' educational posters by the Royal College of Emergency Medicine and the Irish Association of Emergency Medicine to every Emergency Department in the UK and Ireland.

In a letter to all Emergency Departments, Professor Richard Body of the Royal College of Emergency Medicine says: *"The 'Think Aorta' campaign is centred on improving patient outcomes & ultimately saving lives by increasing the identification & early diagnosis of Aortic Dissection within the setting of Emergency Medicine. Together, we have created learning tools for ED physicians across the UK & Ireland in the form of a learning podcast & poster, which will be placed in every ED to increase awareness and early diagnosis of patients presenting with Aortic Dissection."*

'Think Aorta' is a patient-led collaboration between patient association Aortic Dissection Awareness (UK & Ireland), the Royal College of Emergency Medicine, the Irish Association for Emergency Medicine, the Society for Cardiothoracic Surgery and Heart Research UK. Working together, a team of patients and clinicians have created the 'Think Aorta' educational resources for Emergency Department physicians.

The 'Think Aorta' podcast has attracted lots of positive comment since its launch in April and has been downloaded over 5,000 times. Now the team is following this success with a poster campaign.

Catherine Fowler, Vice-Chair of Aortic Dissection Awareness (UK & Ireland), explains: *"The campaign was inspired by my Dad, Tim Fleming, who died of an Aortic Dissection in 2015 after being sent home from A&E with an incorrect diagnosis of gastritis. In common with many other family members of patients who have died from a missed diagnosis of Aortic Dissection, this heartbreak drives us to want to make a change. We are delighted to have the full support of the medical profession, in particular RCEM, SCTS and IAEM, in addressing a problem that the experts tell us can be solved by increasing awareness and educating clinicians about Aortic Dissection."*



The 'Think Aorta' podcast and poster can be downloaded from the campaign website **www.thinkaorta.org**. Aortic Dissection Awareness (UK & Ireland) encourage the sharing of these resources as widely as possible.

#### NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. Aortic Dissection Awareness (UK & Ireland) is the Patient Association for people affected by Aortic Dissection and their families. We are the voice of Aortic Dissection patients in the UK & Ireland. Our work involves raising awareness of Aortic Dissection, its diagnosis and treatment; providing vital friendship, support and advice for patients and family members; encouraging research into the condition; and working with healthcare providers to ensure that best practice diagnosis and care for Aortic Dissection are implemented consistently across the UK & Ireland. We measure our success by the increasing number of Aortic Dissection survivors joining our free support network - currently around 250.
2. Production and distribution of the 'Think Aorta' campaign posters is funded by Heart Research UK.

