



## Welcome

to the last Defibber News of the year which although challenging for many, has, thanks to the vaccine rollout, enabled many of us to return to actually living our lives and return to some degree of normality.

Throughout this pandemic, the Patient Support Group have continued to provide help and support wherever possible although despite our very best intentions it has not proved possible for us to stage any of our open meetings which remain one of our important and integral aims particularly for those new patients who have recently been fitted with a device. Mindful of the fact that it's now two years since we last held one and being aware that we're all going to have to adapt and contend with this dreadful virus, we have provisionally booked All Saints Church Hall at Hale Barns for an open meeting on the afternoon of Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> March 2022. Full details and instructions will follow in the next newsletter.

I'm pleased to say we received several expressions of interest and offers of help following our appeal in the summer edition of the newsletter and I'd like to thank all those who got in touch and welcome Jeremy White who has joined the committee along with Tina Osula from the Cardiac Rhythm Management Nursing Team. I would also like to say thanks to those who have sent in donations, which help to fund the newsletters and patient meetings.

**Take a moment and have a look at our Website which will keep you in touch with all of the latest information about forthcoming meetings, Newsletters, interesting articles & links at:**  
<https://wythenshaweicd.wixsite.com/icdsupport>

Finally, thank you to Adrienne for her article on dapagliflozin, which has been found to improve the symptoms of heart failure. Try saying that during the forthcoming festivities, I can barely manage to type it correctly!

Best wishes to everyone for Xmas and the New Year.

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## Improving the symptoms of Heart Failure

In recent years, we have implanted more and more defibrillators with Cardiac Resynchronisation Therapy (CRT) functions too. This is known as CRT-D. These patients are not just at risk of dangerous, life threatening heart rhythms, their hearts do not pump the blood efficiently and they have a condition called heart failure. The 'CRT' part of the device coordinates how the bottom two chambers of the heart (the ventricles) pump the blood out of the heart to the lungs and the rest of the body. The 'D' part of the device watches for and treats life threatening heart rhythms.

### What is dapagliflozin?

Recent research (National Institute for health and Care Excellence or NICE, February 2021) has shown that the medicine dapagliflozin (a drug used for diabetes) has been found to improve the symptoms of heart failure. Some patients with heart failure can be given dapagliflozin to help their symptoms because their previous heart failure medicines are no longer working effectively. It can help relieve symptoms of breathlessness, swollen ankles and feet and reduce the amount of fluid build-up in the body.

Medicines like dapagliflozin are called SGLT2 inhibitors and have been used to treat diabetes for many years. Taking dapagliflozin in combination with other heart failure medicines has been shown to help people with heart failure. The Trade name is Forxiga. It may be combined with other medicines for diabetes. These are called Xigduo (dapagliflozin with metformin) and Qtern (dapagliflozin with saxagliptin). These can only be prescribed by a doctor, nurse prescriber, or pharmacist. You cannot get this medicine over the counter.

### How much do you take and at what dose?

The typical dose of dapagliflozin is 10 mg once a day. You may start off on a lower dose of 5 mg to start with, especially if you have problems with your liver function. It is swallowed whole with water and is taken at the same time every day. You can take it with your other medicines in the morning. **You can get a Dosette box from a pharmacy and place all the medicines you take for the week in the Dosette box. Some people may be able to get a "blister pack" from their General Practitioner (GP), but these cost a lot of money to dispense, so the GP will decide if you can have one.** Getting into a tablet taking routine is a good habit to develop, so you don't forget to take your medicines. Setting an alarm on your clock or phone can be helpful. Speak to the doctor or nurse who prescribed the medicine if you are experiencing any of the side effects promptly and seek advice.

### Who cannot have dapagliflozin?

The people who cannot have dapagliflozin are those who have had an allergic reaction or intolerable side effects from dapagliflozin in the past, people who have ketones in their urine and are at risk of or have diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA). It is not recommended for people with Type 1 diabetes.

### How does dapagliflozin work for people with heart failure?

Dapagliflozin works on the kidneys, by removing more sugar from your body when you pass urine. This causes weight loss and increased urine output. By reducing the amount of circulating volume in your blood, the pressure in your heart is reduced.

### Why is dapagliflozin important?

Taking heart failure medicine regularly is important as this helps you to control your symptoms caused by

heart failure. This, in turn, helps to reduce the need to be admitted to hospital, and hopefully, make you feel better. When too much fluid has gathered in your body, this is called "fluid overload" and can make you feel quite unwell. Because your body is full of fluid, this stretches your heart muscle and can increase your risk of dangerous, life threatening heart rhythms. You may be taking several different medicines. All these are doing different jobs to help your heart to pump as efficiently as possible. You may also have to be careful how much fluid and salt you have every day. Watching your weight and being mindful of the size of your ankles, feet, legs, and abdomen are also important. If you are developing "fluid overload", your weight will slowly increase each day, your ankles, feet and/or abdomen may become more swollen, and you may become more tired and breathless. If you are taking dapagliflozin, this helps to keep your heart failure symptoms under control.

### Are there any side effects of taking dapagliflozin?

Dapagliflozin, like all other medicines, has possible side effects. Not everyone will get these side effects, but it is important that you know what they are, before you start the medicine, so you know what to watch for. Discuss this with your prescriber before you start the medicine, so you know what to look out for.

**Common side effects are back pain, dry mouth, dyslipidaemia (abnormality of the lipids), hypoglycaemia, or low blood sugar (when used in combination with insulin or sulfonylurea), increased risk of infection, rash, urine disorders and infections.** Around 1 in 10 women and 1 in 20 men can develop thrush. This can cause itching and discomfort around the genitals and is treated by applying anti-fungal cream to the affected areas. Some people pass more urine than usual. Occasionally, some people can feel dizzy. Some people can have an increase in the amount of red blood cells in the circulatory system and a drop in the kidney function (creatinine clearance) at the start of treatment.

### Uncommon side effects are constipation, itching around the genitals, hypovolaemia (low circulating blood volume or dehydration), thirst, weight loss.

Rare, or very rare side effects include angioedema (swelling under the skin), Fournier's gangrene (a form of necrotising fasciitis, especially around the genitals, sometimes life threatening). If Fournier's gangrene occurs, then urgent medical help should be sought immediately, and the medicine stopped. This occurrence is very rare though. If you have type 2 diabetes there is an increased risk of DKA when you are unwell. More information on the side effects of dapagliflozin is on the patient information leaflet which comes with your medicine.

### What else can I do to control my heart failure?

As well as watching your weight, salt and fluid intake, and taking your medicines regularly, you can do exercise as your body allows. You should avoid excess alcohol and eat a balanced diet. Try to cut down or stop smoking. Contact your doctor or nurse if you have any concerns.