

**Extract taken from Suffolk Primary Care Trust website ([www.suffolk.nhs.uk](http://www.suffolk.nhs.uk))**

**Colchester and Ipswich clinicians ask for your views**

Consultant vascular surgeons at Colchester General and Ipswich hospitals want to hear your views about reconfiguring some services.

It will give patients in east Suffolk, north east Essex and the Colne Valley access to state of the art vascular services - giving them some of the best standards in the country.

The clinicians, who have worked together since 2007 as The Five Rivers Vascular Network, already jointly provide cover for emergencies which has been shown to benefit patients.

The clinicians have made a decision based on best practice and giving their patients the best treatment and care available, to carry out major vascular surgery only at Colchester General Hospital.

The Five Rivers Vascular Network engagement exercise begins on Monday 3 October and you are asked to complete a questionnaire that will help the vascular surgeons understand how the changes might affect you.

The vast majority of vascular patients will not be affected, as major surgery is involved in a relatively small number of procedures. All other aspects of vascular care, such as outpatients' clinics, diagnostics and day case surgery, will continue to be carried out at both Ipswich and Colchester General hospitals.

This decision came about because the Vascular Society of Great Britain and Ireland is determined to halve the mortality rate arising from patients with abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) and its recommendations on how to achieve this have been adopted as national policy. Cambridgeshire and Norfolk have already adopted the national policy and moved all major vascular surgery to Addenbrooke's and the Norfolk and Norwich hospitals respectively.

AAA surgery is required when the blood vessel which supplies blood to the abdomen, pelvis and legs becomes abnormally large or balloons outwards, potentially bursting and causing death, if unchecked. Around 6000 people in England and Wales die every year from a burst aneurysm. Preventative planned surgery can be offered to patients with this condition to stop the AAA from bursting. The Vascular Society has developed a national framework which will mean hospitals undertaking fewer than 100 operations in a three-year period to repair AAAs will no longer be accredited to continue. The Vascular Society has indicated that the minimum number will increase in future to 150 every three years. Ipswich currently carries out on average 27 of these procedures each year and Colchester General, 48.

The added benefit is that AAA screening can now commence in community hospitals and GP practices. This follows the successful bid by the Five Rivers Vascular Network to provide AAA screening, initially to men in their 65<sup>th</sup> year. The Five Rivers Vascular Network is only the second centre in the East of England to have been awarded this status to date by the NHS Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm Screening Programme.

From April 2012, around 5000 men each year in east Suffolk, north east Essex and the Colne Valley will be invited to have an ultrasound scan to determine if they are at risk of developing an AAA and in some cases have preventative surgery. An invitation to attend for AAA screening could reduce AAA related deaths by 43% in men aged 65-75 years. This reduction in deaths relies on these procedures being performed in a vascular centre where high volumes of these procedures are carried out.

Mr Isam Osman, lead consultant vascular surgeon at Ipswich Hospital, said: "As a team, we firmly believe in this proposal. We looked at all the options very carefully and have taken external advice in reaching our view.

"We are all of the opinion that the future of vascular services in east Suffolk and north east Essex and the Colne Valley is secured by bringing together our expertise. If this had not happened, services would have had to go elsewhere, such as Cambridge or Norwich," added Mr Osman.

Mr Chris Backhouse, lead consultant vascular surgeon at Colchester General Hospital, said: "Many aspects of care will be the same. These plans will give all patients access to state of the art technology, giving people a gold standard of care, as Colchester General Hospital will be investing in new specialist equipment to help deliver some of the specialist vascular procedures within our vascular operating theatre. "

The engagement exercise is open until 23 December.

You can fill in a questionnaire online at [www.suffolk.nhs.uk/vascularservices](http://www.suffolk.nhs.uk/vascularservices) To get a hard copy questionnaire or for more information write to the communications team at NHS Suffolk, Rushbrook House, Paper Mill Lane, Bramford, Ipswich, IP8 4DE or call on 01473 770014. Both hospitals will also have copies.

There will be a public meeting at the Lecture Theatre, Education Centre, Ipswich Hospital on 11 October from 6.30pm-8pm. Another will be held at the Postgraduate Medical Centre, Colchester General Hospital, Colchester on 17 October from 6.30pm-8pm.