

Activate Your Heart (AYH)

What is the innovation?

Activate Your Heart (AYH) is an online, interactive cardiac rehabilitation programme designed to support individuals who have had a recent cardiac event, or with a pre-existing heart disease. The programme offers a package of secondary prevention advice aiming to reduce the risk of a further cardiac event and improve an individual's well-being by promoting a healthy lifestyle. The programme has personalised interactive features that include an individualised exercise programme, stress management and smoking cessation support (if appropriate). There is direct access to a health care professional through the 'ask the expert' facility and an interactive forum for all participants to join that is moderated by experts in cardiac rehabilitation. This represents an opportunity for improved quality-of-life for patients, as well as for cost savings for healthcare providers by reducing readmissions. The strength of this programme is that is developed and supported by a leading team of healthcare professionals; there is also the ability to offer a managed service to organisations adopting the technology.



Who came up with the innovation?

AYH was developed by a team of rehabilitation specialists at University Hospitals of Leicester (UHL), led by Professor Sally Singh.

What problem does it solve?

Despite offering a significant reduction in patient mortality following a cardiac event, uptake of cardiac rehabilitation services is nationally low. The National Audit of Cardiac Rehabilitation reported that as few as 45% of patients eligible for rehabilitation in the UK were participating in a programme. Whilst there are regional differences in rehabilitation services offered to patients, adherence to programmes is a critical factor and patients frequently state that timing of appointments, travel to clinics and family commitments affect their participation. AYH offers the advantage as an online tool that it can be used remotely, and is therefore time and location independent. The programme allows participants to log their own progress that is also monitored remotely by the rehabilitation team and provides an opportunity for communication with the team, should the patient have questions or concerns.

What was the inspiration for the idea?

The idea arose because of the poor uptake for cardiac rehabilitation and the need to develop effective and viable alternatives that would appeal to a number of candidates for cardiac rehabilitation.

Was there any IP? How was it protected? Were there any complications (infringement/FtO)?

IP arose in several forms related to AYH. Firstly, the content and code for the website is protected by copyright. Although an external company was used to build the website and could automatically claim copyright to that, the Trust ensured that copyright was assigned over; the statement “Copyright © 2016 University Hospitals of Leicester NHS trust. All rights reserved” at the bottom of the webpage asserts that right. Activate Your Heart was also registered as a trademark in order to protect the ‘brand’ and its image. This keeps AYH as a distinct offering to current and potential users of the service. Finally, there is a significant amount of know-how in the design and development of the programme provided by the clinical team.

Where is the innovation now (stage of development)?

AYH has been rolled out across Leicestershire and there is evidence that patients using the programme demonstrate and improvement in exercise capacity, quality of life and dietary habits following participation. The Cardiac Rehabilitation Service at UHL has seen an increase in the number of patients using their services since the introduction of AYH.

AYH is also being piloted in two Scottish Health Boards under the terms of a user licence and Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust has recently licenced the programme. In addition, the Department of Work and Pensions licenced the programme as part of its ‘Fit for Work’ scheme.

Future plans for the innovation?

Future plans for AYH include expanding access to the programme across the NHS and, potentially, further afield. In addition, options for accessing the programme on different platforms are being explored and a mobile version for smart phones has been developed. Most recently the team have begun to develop a specific module for those with chronic heart failure, these patients typically present with subtly different symptoms, notably breathlessness and fatigue and, therefore, require a different approach to improve overall exercise performance and well-being. The team at UHL will continue to evaluate and improve the programme as new evidence comes to light.