

Deactivating ICD's in terminally ill patients

With the significant increase in the number of ICD implants in the UK and particularly with the increase in devices for Heart Failure we are dealing with a different population of patient than previously. Inevitably a number of these patients will develop terminal illnesses and the problem of de-activating their ICD to reduce the risk of shocks occurring immediately before or at death is an issue that is becoming more and more of a problem.

HRUK does not have a policy document on this topic as it was felt that 2 current publications address the issue quite clearly. The short guide available from the Arrhythmia Alliance provides a form of consent to be completed when de-activating an ICD and also a brief summary of the issues involved. A long guidance by the British Heart Foundation covers the ethical issues involved together with suggested procedures. Both these documents are available on the web and links to both are on the HRUK website <http://www.hruk.org.uk/html/articles.html>

Several networks and local centres are developing protocols of their own based on these and these will be put up on the website when available. All implanting centres will need to have a protocol for dealing with this whether it is self-generated or adopted from one of the existing ones.

If there are any queries or suggestions about this feel free to contact us at HRUK.

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