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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Launch of New Stroke Service for Fylde Patients**

A NEW rapid access service for patients at high risk of stroke has been launched at Blackpool Victoria Hospital which could help to save dozens of lives every year.

The new service will enable patients who have suffered a TIA (Transient Ischaemic Attack), often known as a mini-stroke, to have a series of tests and investigations with a dedicated stroke specialist and start immediate treatment.

To support the new service Dr James McIlmoyle, lead stroke physician, will be joined by stroke physician Dr Mark O'Donnell – making Victoria Hospital the only hospital in the North West to have two dedicated full time stroke physicians.

Patients who have had a TIA are at high risk of having a stroke but research shows that by assessing their symptoms early and starting preventative treatments the risk of stroke can be reduced by as much as 80 per cent.

Patients who have suffered a TIA can be referred to the clinics from A&E, Medical Assessment Unit or by their GP. They will have their symptoms assessed and have a series of diagnostic tests such as blood tests and ECG to determine their risk of having a stroke. They will then be given appropriate management and lifestyle advice to reduce their risk of having a stroke in the future.

Around 800 patients a year on the Fylde Coast are admitted to Victoria Hospital after suffering a stroke and a further 500 after having a TIA. TIAs occur when part of the brain doesn't get enough oxygen and symptoms are facial weakness, arm weakness or speech deficit. More than a third of people who have one or more TIAs will go on to have a stroke.

Dr James McIlmoyle, Stroke Consultant, said: "A TIA is a warning sign and should not be ignored. Patients who have a TIA have a significant risk of going on to have a stroke which can lead to severe disability or premature death.

"The benefit of this new service is that we can prevent patients at high risk of having a stroke by confirming the diagnosis, completing investigations and starting preventative measures immediately. It will help to speed up treatment

and most importantly save lives by preventing many major strokes from occurring.”

The TIA clinics will run on Monday and Friday afternoon in addition to “hot slots” being available on existing clinics on Tuesday and Thursday morning. All patients referred to the fast-track service will be seen within seven days. Once the service is established the aim is to see all patients within 24-48 hours.

The introduction of TIA clinics is one of the key recommendations of the government’s National Stroke Strategy, which was launched earlier this month.

For further information about this Press Release, please call Caroline Hastie, Communications Manager, on 01253 303538.



**Pic:** The two dedicated full-time stroke physicians - Dr James McIlmoyle, Lead Stroke Physician (left) and Dr Mark O’Donnell, Stroke Physician (right).