

Elective Report – Carinthia Austria

1. What are the prevalent cardiovascular conditions in Austria? How do patients usually present with cardiovascular disease? How does this differ from the UK?

The most prevalent cardiovascular conditions in Austria include ischaemic heart disease, acute coronary syndromes, cerebrovascular accidents. There is a high prevalence of cardiomyopathy and myocarditis as well. In the intensive care unit, the majority of cardiovascular patients at that time were suffering from myocardial infarctions. The main demographic affected tends to be the elderly, 70+ in age affecting both women and men in roughly the same percentages. Hypertension and increased blood cholesterol also affect this population similarly in comparison with the UK and this may be due to the increased sodium intake in their diet. The incidence of cardiovascular mortality is higher in Austria at 400 per 100,000 compared with the UK at 300 per 100,000. There are equivalents to General Practitioners in Austria that can assess cardiovascular risk factors and monitor disease progression. There are also outpatient appointments that can be arranged for the patients.

2. How are cardiovascular teams and services organised and delivered in Austria? How does this differ to the UK and the neighbouring countries in Europe?

The way that the team is organised in Austria is very similar to that in the UK. There are several teams that look after each ward (up to three teams) and patients are monitored with morning ward rounds lead by a senior member of the team who review the observations, medications, and update the management plans. In Klinikum, there are mainly electronic notes, although paper drug charts and notes are also implemented. There is a similar referral method used here as with the UK to provide the necessary services required for the management of the patients. All the services that you'd expect patients to have access to are provided here, including echocardiography, interventional angiography, heart transplants etc. Austria has an advanced healthcare system in comparison with some other neighbouring countries such as Slovenia and Croatia. The healthcare in Austria is usually provided free on the basis of a basic health insurance that is deducted automatically from the peoples' salary, and if you have European Health Insurance Card.

3. What services does the hospital provide in order to reduce cardiovascular risk factors in their population? What methods of education do they employ in order to teach patients more about their cardiovascular condition and how to manage/ avoid it?

The hospital provides treatment for acute conditions as well as medication / advice to reduce cardiovascular risk factors and to manage chronic conditions. There is an emphasis on reducing blood pressure and as well as to avoid smoking and eating saturated foods. It is heavily encouraged to cycle in Klagenfurt and there is an Iron Man event organised every year. Swimming in the local lake Worthersee is also encouraged. Due to the relatively small size of the city, many places are accessible through walking. The amount of sodium consumed here is higher than that in the UK, and food are not obviously labelled with the calorific content as well as the 'traffic light' system for saturated fats sugars, sodium etc.

4. To recognise and overcome cultural differences as well as any potential language barriers. To improve handling of financial responsibility.

The majority of people here are able to converse in basic English to some degree. The younger population are more well versed in English than the elderly. The German spoken here in Klagenfurt is of a different dialect, which makes it more difficult to understand. German language courses are offered at the local university for international students to help develop the language.