

Community Defibrillation

What else should we consider?



The placement of a defibrillator into a community is just part of the story. It is very easy to become distracted by the passion of the project, without considering governance, liabilities and actual need. In past articles we have covered why the most modern equipment should be used; why the correct type of cabinet should be considered; the governance arrangements; project planning and also looking at these as long term investments. Many communities have opted for the cheapest option available, and not necessarily the best. What impact will this have in the future? Are they sustainable? In December 2017, Community Heartbeat undertook a survey on community defibrillators and we share some of the results with you here.

Several issues have recently arisen with community defibrillators. These are medical devices and should be acquired from recognised medical suppliers, and not from just anyone who advertises them for sale. It is highly unlikely that a non-medically based organisation is going to give objective advice about the equipment; the best to use; the liabilities involved; and the long term resilience. Nor are they likely to advise about non-defibrillator issues such as governance, duty of care, and sustainability even though these devices are long term investments. Recently there have been press reports of defibrillators failing in a rescue. In the main, these are due to the devices not being subject to proper governance regimens, or communities being informed that the defibrillator "checks itself", and no further inspections are required. Failure to maintain a medical device may lay open the community to liabilities, as could the incorrect choice of equipment to begin with. Modern defibrillators will always be better suited to community use over older designs, although older designs will normally be cheaper to buy initially.

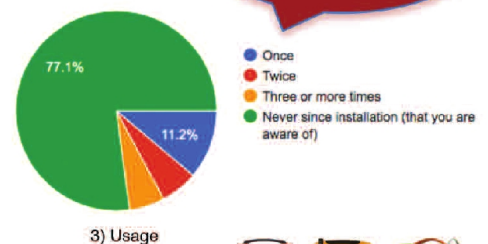
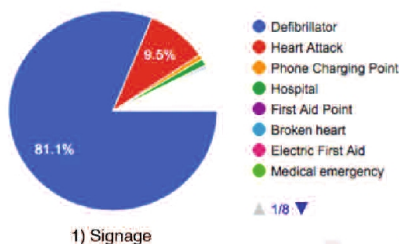


All defibrillator placements should have signage to direct the rescuer to its location. This signage should be easily recognisable and also meet disability needs and be suitable for non-English speaking users. The accepted international defibrillator signage is from an organisation called the International Liaison Committee On Resuscitation - ILCOR (above and left), and is used (or a variation on this) all over the world. Recently an alternative design has been suggested by some organisations who maintain that this internationally recognised sign should be changed to a more obscure UK only design. This will cause confusion and we believe it is not meeting international standards. In addition some 30,000 UK sites now have the ILCOR signage as do all defibrillator manufacturers. Thus to bring into use a design that has had limited or no stakeholder consultation, is confusing, does not meet international standards in an area where standardisation is essential, clearly makes no sense. It is your choice which signage you use. But, if you choose to use non-ILCOR signage in your community, please consider any issues resulting by creating confusion, and causing delays in a time dependent rescue. In addition, a defibrillator STOPS the heart and allows the natural rhythms to start up. It is not a 'Heart Restarter', and to use this term is incorrect and adds to misunderstandings. CHT consider that the use of this term is adding to this increasingly confusing picture, at a time we should be seeking understanding and simplicity.

2017 survey results

In December 2017, CHT undertook a compact survey of 762 respondents to see exactly how various information was being understood by members of the public. This was done both electronically and also by some face:face interviews. The three questions asked related to:

- 1) What is your understanding of the ILCOR defibrillator signage (above) (n=751)
- 2) What is your understanding of how a defibrillator works (n=759)
- 3) How often has your local defibrillator been used. (n=751)



Please ask for a copy of the survey results

