

No Time to Lose: Creating an Aortic Dissection Network as a Streamlined Referral Pathway

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Introduction. Aortic dissection is a life-threatening condition requiring immediate intervention, especially within the first 48 hours without treatment. The current healthcare system in Malaysia faces challenges such as referral delays and lack of standardised care, losing precious time in the management of aortic dissection. In Klang Valley, there are 19 government and university hospitals, but only 3 with Aortic Centres. This proposal aims to create an Aortic Dissection Network (ADN) to streamline and coordinate patient management and improve outcomes, inspired by the successful Southwest NHS Aortic Dissection Pathway.

Objectives. The objectives include establishing a centralised ADN, developing standardised referral and transfer protocols, enhancing inter-hospital communication, providing specialised training, and improving patient outcomes through timely interventions and comprehensive care. In the proposed ADN structure, the network will comprise of designated Aortic Centres, referral hospitals, primary care providers and network coordinators to ensure efficient management and communication.

Referral and Transfer Protocols.

Step 1: Early recognition and diagnosis using standardized protocols.

Step 2: Activation of time-critical referrals, directed by network coordinators to the nearest available Aortic Centres.

Step 3: Rapid transfer using dedicated emergency ambulance services.

Quality improvement measures include a centralised database to track outcomes and continuous evaluation to refine protocols with trainings and public awareness campaigns. The initiative will roll out in two phases: the first in Klang Valley over 12 months and the second across Peninsular Malaysia over 24 months, with anticipated outcomes of reduced treatment times, improved survival rates, and the establishment of the Malaysian Registry of Aortic Surgery (MRAS).

Conclusion. Establishing the ADN will reduce treatment delays, standardise early care and improve survival rate for aortic dissection patients. Future collaborations with private sector Aortic Centres will further expand the network.