

forward

Reducing risks – improving outcomes

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STROKE
FOUNDATION

OF NEW ZEALAND INC



Tramping in New Zealand: a wonderful way to reduce blood pressure and stress levels.

Blood Pressure Awareness Week

Knowing your blood pressure and getting it checked regularly is one of the most important steps you can take to reduce your stroke risk. People with high blood pressure (or hypertension) are at a greater risk of having a stroke. High blood pressure often goes unnoticed amongst New Zealanders and too many people are unaware of the risk it poses, or what they can do about it.

According to Stroke Foundation Health Promotion Manager, Chris Rice, high blood pressure is one of the main risk factors for a stroke, and strokes are the second single largest killer of New Zealanders each year. Ms Rice says it is important for people to be aware of their blood pressure level and take any necessary steps to lower it.

To help raise awareness of this issue the Stroke Foundation - in association with Lions New Zealand, Omron and Sparc - are offering free checks throughout the country in September. As part of the Stroke Foundation's **'Take the Pressure off Stroke'** campaign, there will be up to 100 blood pressure testing sites throughout New Zealand on Saturdays 6 and 13 September.

Thanks to the support of Lions New Zealand, with the help of Omron's blood pressure testing monitors, local sites will range from chemists and libraries to supermarkets and church halls around the country. The Foundation expects these sites to attract a few thousand New Zealanders in total - many of whom will find out that their blood pressure may be higher than is ideal, and who will then be pointed to next steps. (Those interested in finding a free blood pressure testing site near them should go to www.stroke.org.nz to see the list of venues).

In order to operate the testing stations effectively and take accurate blood pressures, Lions volunteers underwent specific training. As part of this programme, a training video was developed and a range of resources produced - all aimed at making

the testing stations a highly successful local event.

An official Beehive launch of the **'Take the Pressure off Stroke'** campaign this year will be made by Hon Ruth Dyson, and the issue will be promoted via a range of media across the country to thousands of New Zealanders. The Stroke Foundation hopes to make blood pressure awareness an annual event over the next few years in an effort to drive up awareness amongst New Zealanders.

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'About Blood Pressure'*

Johnsonville trial sets high standard

With the help of volunteers from the Johnsonville Lion's Club, the Stroke Foundation held a highly successful free blood pressure check at Johnsonville Mall life Pharmacy in June. It was a trial run for testing stations throughout the country in September. Nearly 30 locals took the opportunity to have their blood pressure tested, and those who discovered they may have high blood pressure were encouraged to go to their GP for further testing and possible treatment.

According to Wellington Lions Regional Governor, Rosemary Cook, who was part of the exercise, it was a very positive experience: "Our volunteers enjoyed themselves, the trial was a positive contribution to the community and everyone learnt more about blood pressure in the process." The Stroke Foundation thanks Lions Johnsonville for their time and effort, Johnsonville Life Pharmacy for the venue, and Omron for the blood pressure monitors.

Johnsonville Lions Club member Marlene Batten (left) checks Khandallah resident Dene Lowndes' blood pressure during the free check at Johnsonville Mall Life Pharmacy.



Stroke Foundation Contact Details

If you have any questions about stroke or the Stroke Foundation please contact the National Office or your Regional Office.

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Organised Stroke Service for Waikato Hospital

Those who have a Stroke in the Waikato region can now receive world-class coordinated care through Waikato Hospital's new Organised Stroke Service.

Introduced at the hospital at the end of May, the new service is intended to get an early diagnosis of people presenting at their GP, St John Ambulance or at Waikato Hospital emergency department with symptoms of stroke or transient ischaemic attack (TIA). Raising public awareness of the emergency nature of stroke and TIA symptoms is also a priority for the service. According to Dr Peter Wright, Waikato's clinical director:

"Patients should be brought to the emergency department without delay so we can improve outcomes. The emergency department triage nurse should be told straight away if someone is brought in with a suspected stroke."

The service will then coordinate the patient's journey through the acute stroke unit/inpatient wards, to discharge home with supports or to the hospital rehabilitation service.

Waikato DHB spent \$229,000 over two months to establish the service, which will be phased in over several months. Ongoing funding of more than \$900,000 annually will ensure the seven days a week service can be fully resourced.

Dr Wright said the service brings together nursing, allied health and medical staff from both acute and rehabilitation services. "It's about working to get the best outcome for each stroke patient, bringing all the resources we have to ensure they get the best care.

"As a result, we expect fewer deaths from stroke or TIA, a reduction in the length of time people have to stay in hospital, and the ability to treat most TIA patients as day-stay cases," he said. "We aim to avoid about 20 strokes that would otherwise follow a TIA, and markedly reduce death and disability rates after a stroke."



Dr Peter Wright, Waikato Hospital's Stroke Clinical Director

The service will have its own staff and 18 beds for stroke patients - eight for acute patient care and 10 for rehabilitation. The Waikato DHB region has an ageing population. Over the next 10 years there will be a 40 per cent increase of those aged more than 65 years of age. Research indicates the average age for first ever stroke is 74 years for New Zealand Europeans, but only 62 for Maori. The Organised Stroke Service will be a key part of the Waikato DHB's response to the needs of older Maori.



Fun time in Waitomo

In early July, Waitomo Stroke and Respiratory Group held a Mocktail Party at Hillview Resthome which everyone enjoyed. Members came in their glad rags to enjoy entertainment as well as drinks such as Southsea Sunset and Kiwi Flyer. Musical entertainment was provided by three local lads on guitar, bongos and keyboard. The Waitomo Stroke and Respiratory Group is a joint effort from Waitomo Stroke Support Group, Te Ngaru O Maniapoto, Te Kuiti Community House and Ngati Maniapoto Marae Pact Trust.

Peter Hastie Update

At the end of 2007, we featured South Island stroke survivor Peter Hastie, who is also a representative shooter. Latest word has it that Peter finished the first round of the New Zealand Cup in fourth place following a rifle malfunction that saw him slip from second. Before his rifle troubles he had been just behind the world champ who is now at Olympic Games in Beijing. The second round is in Hamilton in early August where Peter is expected to be in amongst the medals.



Peter Hastie takes aim

World Watch

Northern Ireland

Stroke services in Northern Ireland will receive a \$37m government cash boost over the next three years. The money will be spent on raising public awareness, stroke prevention and improving services for stroke patients. Andrew Dougal, chief executive of the Chest, Heart and Stroke Association, said the money would make a big difference to stroke patients. “This illness has been neglected. This extra money will go some way to make up for the many decades of neglect of stroke in this province.”

BBC UK

Stink bomb gas to give stroke victims new hope

Hydrogen sulphide - the gas that provides millions of schoolchildren with hours of fun and gives stink bombs their revolting smell - could soon provide doctors with new treatments for conditions ranging from stroke to chronic arthritis.

Hydrogen sulphide is corrosive, foul-smelling, flammable and deadly in sufficient concentrations. A single breath can kill. Yet the gas has recently become a buzzword in scientific circles following discoveries that in tiny doses it plays a significant role in influencing some chemical pathways in the body.

“Hydrogen sulphide is made in very low doses in the body and, far from doing harm, it has become clear it can do a great deal of good,” said Dr John Wallace, a pharmacologist at the University of Calgary in Canada. ‘It is found in the brain and is also thought to control blood pressure.’

The Guardian

Burden of Stroke in Singapore

Stroke poses a major disease burden to Singapore, despite slipping to fourth place as cause of death behind cancer, heart disease and (since 2000) pneumonia. Singapore’s population of 3.6 million is rapidly aging: some 8.5% are currently above 65 years and, by 2030, this is expected to rise to 20%.

There is high quality, widely available and heavily subsidized healthcare at primary and hospital levels. Medical insurance policies and a Chronic Diseases Management programme helps fund medical care at the inpatient and outpatient setting for Stroke. With a rapidly aging population, coupled with high prevalence of stroke risk factors in the community, the burden of stroke is expected to dramatically increase. Stroke prevalence is greatest amongst Chinese males and lowest amongst Malay females.

International Journal of Stroke

Leukemia pill may improve stroke treatment

A highly effective leukemia pill may reduce complications and boost the effectiveness of a treatment for the most common type of stroke. Studies in mice showed giving Gleevec (or imatinib) significantly reduced bleeding in the brain associated with the clot-busting drug known as tissue plasminogen activator (also known as tPA). It also appeared to extend the time window in which tPA could be given.

The clot-buster tPA is used to dissolve blood clots in ischaemic stroke, a type of stroke triggered when a blood clot impedes blood flow to the brain, which accounts for four of every five strokes each year worldwide, according to the World Health Organization.

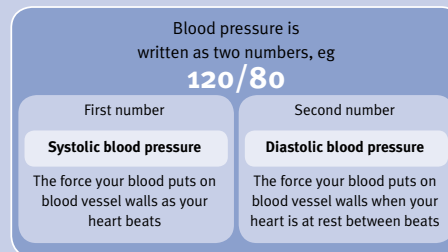
When given within the first three hours of a stroke, tPA can chew up the clot and significantly reduce death and disability. But tPA has two major drawbacks: it can cause blood to leak into the brain and it must be used within three hours after the start of the stroke.

“This leukemia pill may potentially reduce the side effects associated with tPA and increase the population that could receive it,” said Daniel Lawrence, University of Michigan Medical School, who worked with researchers from the Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden. There are plans to start testing the drug combination in humans in the next few months.

Reuters

About Blood Pressure

Blood pressure is the force of the blood on the walls of the arteries as the heart beats.



High blood pressure often has no symptoms and is known as the ‘silent killer’

- High blood pressure is one of the main risk factors for stroke, heart attack and other heart diseases
- High blood pressure is preventable and can be controlled
- Blood pressure can vary throughout the day and from day to day
- The only way to know your blood pressure is to have it checked.

High blood pressure (Hypertension)

Normal blood pressure is about 120/80.

High-normal blood pressure is between 120/80 and 140/90. If blood pressure is consistently over 140/90, it is hypertension or high blood pressure. In general the lower your blood pressure the lower your risk of stroke.

Effects of high blood pressure

High blood pressure can have many harmful effects, which can lead to stroke:

- High blood pressure puts stress on the walls of the blood vessels and can cause them to break down, eventually leading to a stroke
- High blood pressure can speed up common forms of heart disease that can lead to stroke
- High blood pressure can cause blood clots or plaque (cholesterol and other fatty substances) to break off the artery

walls and block a brain artery causing a stroke.

Why check blood pressure?

Keeping blood pressure at a healthy level is one of the most important things people can do to reduce their risk of stroke. The only way to know your blood pressure is to have it checked regularly. *It is very important that a doctor or practice nurse confirms the blood pressure reading.*

The Stroke Foundation is grateful for your support in providing free blood pressure checks and in doing so making more people aware of blood pressure and the need to have it checked regularly, therefore ‘taking the pressure off stroke’.

Lowering blood pressure and reducing stroke risk

Most people can control high blood pressure by a combination of diet, exercise and medication:

- Healthy eating – a diet low in fat and salt and high in fruit and vegetables
- Regular physical activity – at least 30 minutes of physical activity 5 days per week – ask your doctor if a Green Prescription¹ is suitable for you
- Moderate alcohol intake – 1 glass a day for women and 2 for men
- Don’t smoke
- Know your blood pressure and have it checked regularly.

Your doctor may prescribe medication to reduce your blood pressure. There are many different types of medication and your doctor may need to increase the dose or use medications in combination to reduce your blood pressure.

¹A Green Prescription is not a substitute for medications. It is written advice to be active. With it you can improve your health and feel better at the same time.

Combined Stroke Forum and Nursing Symposium is a first for New Zealand

New Zealand's first ever combination of Stroke Forum and Nurses Symposium is the latest initiative from the Stroke Foundation in its ongoing commitment to strengthening and improving stroke services throughout New Zealand. Scores of stroke delegates are expected to take part in this unique event in Wellington, 23-24 October 2008.

According to Stroke Foundation CEO, Mark Vivian: "We are delighted to provide this unique opportunity for the stroke community in New Zealand. In recent years, we have exercised a lot of initiative on behalf of New Zealanders, such as the creation of Stroke Guidelines for NZ in line with the best international stroke practice, as well as improving stroke awareness and prevention. This event builds on this commitment to encouraging excellence in stroke care."

"We have some excellent practitioners in NZ, so this event is a great opportunity to share insights and to network. Also, the inclusion of a Stroke Nurses symposium recognises how crucial nurses are to improved stroke outcomes and subsequent care."

In the spotlight this year will be TIA, stroke incidence, directions for acute stroke care and advances in stroke nursing. Presenters include: celebrated US Neurologist, Dr Clay Johnston, who will focus on TIA and comes to NZ following a sabbatical with the World Health Organisation; and specialist Nurse

Educator, Dr Lin Perry, who is on the cutting edge of stroke nursing developments in Australia and the UK.

Some of NZ's leading stroke experts - Emeritus Prof Ruth Bonita, Prof Alan Barber, Dr John Gommans, Dr Matire Harwood, Dr Sandy Dawson, Tamsin Gallie and Simone Newsham - will also share research and best practice on areas such as: seeing NZ in a global context, NZ studies (ARCOSS), Maori and Stroke, communication strategies for nurses, dysphagia and acute stroke nursing, and more besides.

To see the programme and register for the Symposium and/or Forum online, go to www.stroke.org.nz



For more information go to www.stroke.org.nz

New Chair in Clinical Neurology

Stroke Foundation's Northern Region medical adviser, Dr Alan Barber, has been appointed Professor of Clinical Neurology at Auckland University. This new position, established by the Neurological Foundation of New Zealand, builds a stronger link between Auckland University's neurological research and the Stroke expertise developed at Auckland City Hospital, where Dr Barber is an Acute Stroke Specialist.

In his clinical role, Dr Barber provides leadership in stroke treatment and management at the three Auckland regional hospitals. In 2007, he established a 12-bed stroke unit in the neurology ward at Auckland City Hospital.

Dr Barber has been a member of the Neurology Foundation's Scientific Advisory Committee since 2003 and was previously a recipient of the Foundation's Chapman Research Fellowship which allowed him to study for a PhD at the Royal Melbourne Hospital. His research centred on the use of different imaging techniques (particularly MRI measures) to study the brains of patients in the hours and days after stroke.

Combining his clinical and research expertise, Dr Barber is a member of the steering committee and an investigator in the third Auckland Regional Community Stroke (ARCOS) study, one of the largest epidemiological studies of stroke ever undertaken.

New Resource

In response to requests from the stroke community, a new rehabilitation resource is now available for purchase. The BIT DVD & CD (Bilateral Isokinematic Training) is a practical stroke rehabilitation resource developed by the Stroke Foundation. It can be ordered directly from our website www.stroke.org.nz or just email us for a copy. For Stroke members (just say which club and/or quote your number when ordering), the price is \$30 (gst incl) plus freight. For those who are not Stroke members, the price is \$50 (gst incl) plus freight.



Professor Alan Barber

Stroke Foundation of New Zealand Inc is grateful for the support of the following organisations:

