

forward

Reducing risks – improving outcomes

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STROKE
FOUNDATION
OF NEW ZEALAND INC

Down with Blood Pressure campaign a big success

Down with Blood Pressure was the message to New Zealanders during this year's highly successful Stroke Awareness Week, which ran from 7 to 13 September. The campaign was designed to raise awareness of the link between high blood pressure and stroke, and Kiwis were urged to use the awareness week as a prompt to have their blood pressure checked.

On Saturday 12 September, the Stroke Foundation, in partnership with St John and Lions, offered free blood pressure checks at over 100 'blood pressure sites' around New Zealand. The majority of sites were provided by Foodstuffs in their New World and Pak 'n Save supermarkets. Almost 12,000 shoppers took the opportunity to have their blood pressure checked.

The campaign was given a huge boost this year by several inspirational stroke survivors including Debbie Rees, Dave Fane, Roger Lampen and Toni Watson, who shared their personal stories of stroke and rebuilding their lives.

Stroke survivor, Ricky Te Whare came from Dunedin to speak at the *Down with Blood Pressure* launch at Parliament. He shared his story with around 70 invited guests and Hon

Blood pressure checks in action at a Nelson City New World supermarket.



Tariana Turia, Associate Minister of Health. Ricky's story began in 2003, when he was just 41 years old and went to the doctor because he felt 'something wasn't quite right'. This decision saved his life. Ricky's doctor found his blood pressure was sky high and sent him straight to hospital. When Ricky got to hospital, he had a stroke. Because Ricky was in hospital when his stroke occurred, his treatment could begin straight away. His experiences as he rebuilt his life proved the highlight of the launch and set the scene for a positive campaign. The free blood pressure checks and the inspirational personal stories, helped the Stroke Foundation gain excellent media coverage for Stroke Awareness Week, including on radio and in major daily and regional newspapers.

A big thank you to all who contributed to the success of the campaign: St John and Lions volunteers, Foodstuffs, stroke survivors, participating health providers, regional stroke teams, and others. Many braved cold, wet weather to make Kiwis more aware of stroke and help save lives in the future.

Free checks find 45 percent have elevated blood pressure

The Stroke Foundation's Medical Advisor Dr John Fink says he was shocked to learn that nearly half of those who took advantage of recent free blood pressure checks had raised blood pressure.

"Forty-five percent of the blood pressures reported back to the Stroke Foundation were above normal."

Dr Fink says the high blood pressure rate usually quoted for New Zealand is one in five adults. This information is from the 2002/03 New Zealand Health Survey, and uses self reported data.



Ricky Te Whare with Hon Tariana Turia at the campaign launch.
Photo: Renee Kiriona

"The findings from the recent blood pressure checks suggest the rates of high blood pressure may be much higher than the one in five figure, and much higher than people themselves think."

Findings from the blood pressure checks

- Approximately 110 blood pressure check sites participated on Saturday 12 September.
- Of the approximately 12,000 people checked, almost 10,500 results have been received and analysed by the Stroke Foundation.
- 45 percent of participants had elevated blood pressure readings. (Elevated readings were those 140 mm Hg and above for systolic, or 90 mm Hg and above for diastolic).
- 15 percent were referred to a GP or nurse as a result of their readings.
- 5 percent of participants with raised readings had results in the severe hypertension range, ie, greater than 180 mm Hg systolic, with a number of these readings well over 200.
- 80 percent of participants could not recall the results of their last blood pressure reading.
- 52 percent had had a blood pressure test in the last 12 months.

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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New stroke brochure for Maori: He Toto Rere Pai He Tohu Ora

In partnership with Huia Communications, the Stroke Foundation has developed a brochure on stroke and the importance of regular blood pressure checks for Maori.

Stroke Foundation Health Promotion Manager Heather Kizito says the new resource reflects the organisation's increasing commitment to Maori health.

"Our aim is to partner with Maori health providers and relevant agencies to help reduce risks for stroke and improve health outcomes for Maori. We want to improve our responsiveness to the needs of Maori and we welcome partnerships and suggestions."

The Stroke Foundation is grateful for the support of Associate Health Minister, Hon Tariana Turia, in the development of this resource. Copies can be ordered through the National and Regional Offices of the Stroke Foundation.

Free check a wake up call for Warkworth shopper

When Susan Renshaw was doing her weekly shopping in Warkworth New World, she came across one of the Stroke Awareness Week 'blood pressure stations' offering free blood pressure checks to shoppers.

Out of interest, she decided to have her blood pressure checked. Aged 62, Susan had always had low blood pressure when tested in the past.

"I consider myself to be quite healthy and my blood pressure has always been good when I've been to the doctor previously. I was absolutely amazed at the result of this one."

Susan's check revealed her blood pressure was higher than average – something that has made her re-evaluate her lifestyle.

"I intend to visit my doctor in Auckland and discuss the result. But it's also made me think about getting more exercise – even simple things like walking the dog.

"I think the free blood pressure checks were a marvellous idea because people rarely go to the doctor about their blood pressure. If you're a fairly healthy person you don't think about these things until you have a wake-up call like this."



Susan Renshaw

Research shows industry could do more to reduce salt

The New Zealand food industry could be doing much more to reduce salt in their foods, according to new international research. Too much salt in our diets is the major cause of high blood pressure, and processed food is the greatest source of our salt intake.

Recent international research by World Action on Salt and Health (WASH) shows salt levels can be reduced by global brands when they want to, as illustrated by major differences between similar products sold in New Zealand and the rest of the world.

WASH surveyed more than 260 food products available around the world from KFC, McDonalds, Kellogg's, Nestle, Burger King and Subway. Not one product surveyed had the same salt content around the world, and some showed huge differences in salt content, with New Zealand recording some of the worst salt levels in some foods.

For instance, a KFC Original Fillet Burger in New Zealand contains 50 percent more salt per serving than the same product in Australia, and nearly three times more salt than in Europe. This shows New Zealand food producers can do much more to improve the health of their products, says Mark Vivian, NZ Stroke Foundation CEO.

"A gradual reduction in salt can easily be done across all products. A percentage at a time and the change is not noticeable to consumers, but will make a significant impact on blood pressure in this country."

While the National Heart Foundation and some New Zealand food manufacturers are making progress in reducing salt volumes in processed foods, there's still a long way to go to create healthy levels of salt content.

Researchers confirm that salt content in New Zealand processed food is still much too high: New Zealanders consume an average 9 grams of salt a day, but the World Health Organization recommends intake of between 3 grams to 6 grams a day depending on body mass. This means most New Zealanders need to reduce their salt intake by 50 percent, and most of this can be achieved by the reduction of salt content in processed food.



Two targets in John's sights

Cycling may be out, but driving and work are two attainable targets for radiologist, Dr John Goulden, as he fights back from a severe stroke a year ago. Although he has made remarkable progress, John realises there is still much to achieve if he wants to get back behind the wheel of a car or play a meaningful role at MidCentral Health as medical imaging enters the digital age.

"My days of cycling are probably gone, but it's not the end of the world," said John. "I have been able to enjoy doing those normal things again, like walking around The Square, but I really would like to drive and get back to work and carry on from there." John's stroke happened while he was taking part in the Tour de Manawatu in November last year. Determined to keep with the bunch up a challenging climb, the 46-year-old began feeling pins and needles in his right hand, and on reaching the top, knew things were "not good".

When help arrived about 10 to 15 minutes later, John was getting weak and couldn't stand. A CT scan revealed a large brain bleed and after being put into an induced

coma John was taken by helicopter to Wellington Hospital and admitted to the neurosurgical ward.

Two weeks' treatment followed before John returned to Palmerston North and the Star 3 rehabilitation ward. It was there that he suddenly woke up and again became aware of life around him – but he was terribly confused by things.

"I did some tests and it wasn't a good look, having difficulties with questions that my four-year-old daughter could answer."

The signs for John, who is right-handed, were bleak: he was completely paralysed down the right side and could do nothing with his arm or leg, and had difficulty in getting out every second word when speaking. Since then, however, there has been slow, steady progress, with his three months' inpatient stay in Star 3 involving intensive rehabilitation sessions covering physio, speech language therapy and occupational therapy.

Before the stroke, John was a leading figure at MidCentral DHB's Medical Imaging Department. John has recently undergone a neuropsychological test, required by the Medical Council, to determine suitability for return to work, albeit in an initial part-time capacity.

"One thing I did not realise was how tired you get after a stroke. A full day on the go and I'm knackered."

John is now back walking, though weaker in the right arm and leg, and feels he is continuing to improve both mentally and with his speech language therapy.

"The biggest problem is less sensation and you don't realise how much you depend on it. I'm doing a lot of things left-handed, not because of a lack of power in my right hand, but because I can't feel what I'm doing."

- MidCentral Health.

John Goulden reading out loud medical imaging/radiology reports and letters into a dictaphone as part of his weekly speech language therapy sessions.



One year on: Hutt Valley District Health Board

The Stroke Foundation has been promoting improved stroke services nationally for some time now, so it is encouraging to see more and more dedicated stroke units springing up round the country.

For instance, the dedicated stroke unit at Hutt Valley District Health Board has now completed its first year of operation. The unit provides a six bed facility on the general medical ward for people who have had acute strokes.

The multidisciplinary team that looks after stroke patients is made up of generalists

on the medical ward who have developed a specialist interest in stroke. Teamwork and regular education for staff and patients are key features. The team says processes of care for stroke patients have markedly

improved and it is currently analysing its work.

The unit's first birthday was celebrated with cake, and a bottle or two of sparkling grape juice.

Photo (L-R, back to front row)

Dr Tom Thomson, RN Amor Gabriel, PT Kath Tonks, SW Huia Swanson, SLT Brigette Hoffman, CNS Olivia Browne, RN Tupe Soi, Dr Alex Lampen-Smith, Dr YC Lee, RN Amelie Chapman, HCA Hellen Kaisa, OT Martha Sorenson.



World Watch

USA: Call for urgent action on stroke patient arrival time

Late arrival to the hospital after the onset of acute stroke symptoms is regarded by US stroke physicians and researchers as a "plague of unheralded proportions". One that is not easily treated or cured.

Researchers reveal the contributors to this problem are many, such as a lack of urgent response to symptoms by patients and family, patient inability to use emergency systems because of neurologic damage, and even fear of embarrassment

by lay people that they may have made an inappropriate call to US emergency services.

According to Dr Anne Alexandrov, of the University of Alabama Hospital, stroke experts in the US are particularly upset that public awareness of stroke has not yet combined with an urgent community response to stroke symptoms. Dr Alexandrov sites research into "healthline" phone service trainee responses to calls from stroke victims.

On hearing of stroke symptoms, less than one in five operators correctly recommended immediate emergency response. Even worse, only one in four could correctly name one warning sign of stroke. The findings were particularly disturbing given that the US hospitals concerned serve as practice sites for physicians on the forefront of diagnosing and treating stroke along with training the next generation of neurologists.

- Comprehensive Stroke Centre, University of Alabama Hospital

The story of one man's stroke journey

Prominent Kiwi businessman Roger Lampen was fit and healthy, embarking - in his early sixties - on his biggest adventure to date; or so he thought. In 2007, during a cycling tour through the Himalayas, Roger suffered a stroke, ending up in an isolated military hospital in Tibet.

It's All in the Mind tells the story of Roger's transition from being a passionate and apparently healthy cyclist to suffering all the drama and setbacks of experiencing a stroke - in one of the most isolated and inhospitable regions of the world.

It's All in the Mind is also the story of Roger's self-directed recovery and the determination he has shown to rehabilitate himself since his stroke.

Throughout the book, he shows the daily challenges faced during the journey of stroke recovery from the perspective of a stroke survivor.

"What is critical, in my experience, is believing that you will improve and that you can drive the improvement. Personally, I have no interest in accepting such common wisdom about strokes as 'you will see the greatest progress in the first six months and very little after that'. I believe that things will continue to improve if I focus on them and continue to work at them. As I become aware of improvements, the question I ask myself is why shouldn't I keep improving if I keep working at it? Progress stimulates more progress. Belief is a powerful tool. And where does belief come from? It's all in the mind."

It's All in the Mind is available from selected book stores; Dunmore Publishing, PO Box 25080, Wellington 6146, phone 04 472 2705, email books@dunmore.co.nz or online at www.dunmore.co.nz. Recommended retail price is \$28.95.

Highlights of the past 12 months

While the health issues of stroke are huge, the Stroke Foundation is greatly encouraged by the success achieved this latest reporting year.

Some highlights have been:

- direct-mailing of 600,000 households with the Act FAST message
- our donor database continued its rise from 4,900 in May 2007 to 37,000 by June 2009
- we had a five-fold increase in positive media contact for stroke-related stories
- website usage increased an average of 20 percent on the previous year
- stroke-related resources have been revamped and new ones created - with demand increasing by nearly 50 percent overall
- our first blood pressure campaign raised awareness of this crucial health issue
- our Transient Ischaemic Attack guidelines were completed and endorsed by the Ministry of Health and Royal College of General Practitioners
- New Zealand's first combined Stroke Forum and Stroke Nursing Symposium took place in Wellington, October 2008
- our audit of District Health Board acute stroke services was approved by the Ministry and is fully underway.

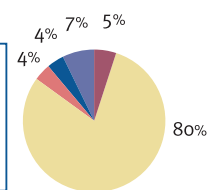
A big thank you goes to our network of dedicated supporters. Increased support is reflected in our income, and the range of work we are undertaking in partnership with the Ministry of Health and the National Stroke Foundation of Australia.

We are particularly thankful for the generous financial support of organisations such as Omron, Bupa (previously Guardian Healthcare), Pfizer, Lottery Welfare, Ryman Healthcare, SPARC and the David Ellison Charitable Trust. Many of our important stroke awareness raising and risk reducing resources were enabled by these partnerships, as well as by the crucial support of thousands of individual donors throughout New Zealand.

Income and Expenditure

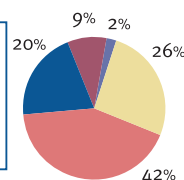
Donations & other income

Grants	\$89,584
Donations	\$1,403,192
Contracts	\$76,222
Sponsorship	\$62,000
Other	\$128,457
Total	\$1,759,455



Operating expenditure

Operating Costs	\$146,147
Donations	\$424,602
Info Services	\$684,819
Staffing	\$329,106
Other	\$37,351
Total	\$1,622,025



Blokes against strokes

We all know that feeling of trawling the shops for hours to try and find the perfect gift for the man in your life. But this year help is at hand! The Stroke Foundation has teamed up with Made From New Zealand to offer some very special t-shirts for blokes against strokes.

The tees come with a piece of merino yarn stitched into them - yarn spun from a climbing sock that belonged to the late Sir Edmond Hillary. They cost \$40 including GST, postage and packaging, and \$20 of this will go to the Stroke Foundation to help us save lives and support people after stroke.

This year, finding the perfect Christmas gift doesn't need to be like climbing a mountain!

The t-shirts come in XL, Large and Medium; and are in two designs - Kiwi DNA and Tiki. Colours are black, blue, green, yellow and

red. For more information and to place an order, see the Stroke Foundation website: www.stroke.org.nz. (And thanks to our model Mike, who says he actually was smiling, even though it might not look like it!)



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

