

forward

Reducing risks – improving outcomes

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STROKE
FOUNDATION
OF NEW ZEALAND INC



Increase in stroke deaths: latest health data

Stroke deaths continue to rise in New Zealand, according to the latest Ministry of Health (MOH) information. The MOH report¹ shows 2674 New Zealanders died from stroke in 2006 – an increase of nearly a hundred on the previous year. This is an average of more than seven deaths a day from stroke in this country.

As the total population increases, so do the total number of deaths from stroke – even though the rate per capita continues to decline. Stroke deaths per 100,000 population continue to slightly decrease each year with an average 35.8 in 2006, slightly less than 2005. The steady decline in death rate for stroke over the last 20 years

¹Mortality and Demographic data 2006

has been almost exactly balanced by the ageing of the population in general, and the increase in the New Zealand's population in that time. Regarding deaths by gender, the majority of stroke deaths continue to be female (62.6%).

The MOH's report shows Stroke is the third greatest cause of death in NZ after all cancers combined (8094) and ischaemic heart disease (5912).

Age-standardised death rates for stroke are higher among Maori than non-Maori:

Of those who suffer a stroke
One in every 3 Maori | **One in every 20 non-Maori**
will be under 65 years of age

The improvement in the treatment of heart disease continues to challenge stroke treatment, according to Dr John Fink, the Stroke Foundation's medical adviser. "These latest figures show a much greater reduction in mortality for heart disease over the same time period, with an overall reduction in the population mortality rate. We have not achieved this for stroke yet.

"The challenge for all of us involved with stroke care – the Ministry, DHBs and so on – is to improve stroke awareness and prevention, as well as continuing to improve management of stroke acute and rehabilitation services. Experience and research shows organised Stroke units are clearly the most effective way to improve stroke outcomes, along with effective rehabilitation."

Stroke and Chris Knox

It is testimony to the standing of Chris Knox amongst New Zealand's wider arts fraternity that two high profile events have successfully raised funds for both his family and for stroke rehabilitation, as well as raising stroke awareness following Chris' stroke in June 2009.

The first event, in August 2009, was a TVNZ 7 art auction in Auckland which raised \$41,000 for rehabilitation projects in the Stroke Foundation's Northern Region. A number of artists from across the TVNZ 7 series, *New Artland*, which Chris Knox, 57, had been hosting, generously contributed works of art and items which sold at auction. Support came from many artists of note such as Dick Frizzell and Virginia King. TVNZ's General Manager of Digital Services, Eric Kearley, was thrilled to have the opportunity to join the effort: "Having a real and tangible impact on New Zealander's lives is an important cornerstone of TVNZ 7's

strategy. It is therefore extremely satisfying when we manage to participate in raising funds that will make a real difference."

Stroke Foundation CEO, Mark Vivian, was equally impressed by the event's success: "Stroke survivors often miss out on opportunities for rehabilitation, which are not well funded in New Zealand. We're very thankful to these artists and TVNZ 7 for seeing this need and supporting it."

This event was followed a few months later by a double CD of Knox's works by other artists. As a founding father of alternative music in NZ, the album project *Stroke – Songs for Chris Knox* had no trouble gathering an all-star mix of local and international talent to perform his songs



Chris Knox presented TVNZ 7's *New Artland* series

from both his solo work and his groups The Enemy, Toy Love and the Tall Dwarfs. The album sold out its first run within a fortnight of launching in November and has featured in nearly every 2009 best album list in New Zealand's media. All proceeds from the CD sales go to Chris and his family.



Who *increased* the salt in my Honey puffs?

Salt assault three years on

Recent studies continue to confirm the strong link between salt intake and the risk of stroke. The greatest source of salt intake for Westerners is through processed food. Research by the Stroke Foundation of NZ shows some producers of key processed foods are beginning to heed the salt reduction message, while some have actually increased their sodium content of some foods.

The Foundation looked at a range of breads and cereals two and half years ago, recording their sodium levels. Since this time – thanks to pressure from a variety of agencies – sodium levels in many of these products have begun to decline overall.

For instance, a pack of Pam's Toasted Breakfast Muesli has dropped its sodium content from 42mg to 11mg per 100g. While Sanitarium has dropped sodium levels in their Skippy Cornflakes from 920mg to 680mg per 100g, their 250g pack of Honey Puffs has increased its levels of sodium from 6mg to 119mg! And their Simply Natural has nearly doubled from 78mg to 133mg.

Most bread brands have reduced their sodium levels in the last few years by an average 50mg per 100g. For example, one of the biggest reductions was in Nature's Fresh White Sandwich 700g, reducing from 545mg to 400mg per 100g. Also Freya's Traditional White 750g fell from 530mg to 430mg. Only one increase was recorded – Burgen's Barley & Sunflower rose from 320mg to 330.

While this is some progress overall, there is still a long way to go before processed foods have healthy sodium levels.

Large international study confirms salt increases stroke risk

According to the *British Medical Journal*, researchers have combined thirteen studies of the impact of salt intake on 177,000 people from six countries, including United States, Scotland and Japan. The study conclusively shows people who ate more salt had a higher chance of having a stroke. On average, an extra five grams of salt a day was linked to a 23 per cent higher risk of stroke.

Eating too much salt on a regular basis can lead to high blood pressure, which is the single biggest risk factor for stroke. Over 40% of strokes could be prevented if people with high blood pressure reduced it through treatment and cutting down on their salt intake. The Stroke Foundation is calling for consistent labeling on food packaging so people are more aware of how much salt already exists in the food they are buying.

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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Some CEREAL Brands	Sodium/100g – 2007	2009
Sanitarium Honey Puffs	6mg	119
Sanitarium Simply Natural	78mg	133
Sanitarium Skippy Cornflakes	920mg	680
Sanitarium Weetbix	280mg	280
Kellogg's Special K	536mg	510
Kellogg's All Bran	380mg	380
Kellogg's Just Right	30mg	30
Pam's Fruit & Fibre	311mg	221
Pam's Toasted Breakfast Muesli	42mg	11
Hubbard's Light & Right	330mg	150
Hubbard's Thank Goodness	52mg	79
Some BREAD Brands	Sodium/100g – 2007	2009
Nature's Fresh Multigrain Toast	530mg	440
Nature's Fresh White Sandwich	545mg	400
Pam's Multigrain	500mg	450
Pam's White	538mg	450
Budget White Toast	537mg	450
Freya's Traditional White	530mg	430
Freya's Multigrain	515mg	450
Burgen Barley & Sunflower	320mg	330
Country split	515mg	450
Ploughman's Barley & Sunflower	510mg	510
McKenzie High Country Southern Grain	525mg	525
Molenberg Balance '67 calories a slice'	450mg	400
Vogel's Original Mixed Grain	425mg	425
Quality Bakers Spicy Fruit Loaf	360mg	300

Unique Centre for Brain Research Opens

The Centre for Brain Research (CBR), which opened at Auckland University in November 2009, may well be an international first.

According to CBR Director, Professor Richard Faull, the centre brings together for the first time the major groups of researchers studying the brain at Auckland University, as well as clinicians and other crucial groups outside the University. The greater the diversity of the inputs into brain research, the better the outcomes, he said.

While other countries have brain centres focused on research, Professor Faull believes there may not be another like the Auckland one which has an exceptional unity and relational strength built over many years. He said this immediately frees the centre to begin crucial work because the levels of trust are already high.

Prof Alan Barber is CBR Deputy Director. As well as a practising neurologist at Auckland City Hospital, Prof Barber is the first Neurological Foundation of NZ Chair in Clinical Neurology, and the Medical Advisor for the Stroke Foundation Northern Region. Prof Barber said one of his major roles has been to link hospital clinicians, neurologists and neurosurgeons into the research.



(left-right) Profs Alan Barber, Richard Faull and Iain Martin open the Auckland University Centre for Brain Research.

“This means clinicians can have input into research projects right from the outset to ensure questions are ones clinicians

want answers to. In the end, we expect to translate this research into improved therapies and treatments for patients.”

World Watch

Passive smoking a 'global threat': WHO

Almost 95% of the world's population is unprotected by laws banning smoking, the World Health Organisation says. In its second major report on the “tobacco epidemic”, the UN agency said second-hand or passive smoking kills nearly 600,000 people each year.

The WHO said seven new countries passed comprehensive smoke-free laws in 2008, taking the world total to a mere 17. It warned that tobacco is still the leading preventable cause of death, killing five million people every year.

– World Health Organisation

Tonal languages use different part of brain: USA

Stroke sufferers often lose the ability to speak or remember events, but the difficulty of re-learning a language can depend on which part of the brain was affected by the stroke and which language is being learnt. Professor Anthony Kong, University of Central Florida, says brain imaging techniques show tonal languages, such as Chinese, make more use of the right side of the brain, whereas the processing for Latin based languages, such as English, tends to occur in the left side. This means for Chinese speakers, most of the medical research on re-learning language after a stroke may not be relevant to them, as it comes from investigations with English speakers.

Professor Kong is now researching the way brain damage affects speech, hoping this will lead to better after stroke therapy for speakers of Chinese and other tonal languages.

– BBC News

Stroke care in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka has a population of nearly 21 million and a gdp of \$32 billion. With a life expectancy of 72 years, it ranks well above India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The profile of Stroke has significantly risen in Sri Lanka in the last few years with the formation of the Association of Sri Lankan Neurologists (2007), followed by a series of awareness raising and technical training workshops.

As a developing nation, Sri Lanka is in epidemiological transition. While infectious diseases such as tuberculosis and malaria are still prevalent, there are increasing trends for cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases, diabetes and cancer.

Cerebrovascular diseases are the fifth largest leading cause of hospital deaths at 13 per 100,000 population (approx 2750 annually), with stroke prevalence an estimated 9/1000 population, which is approximately 189,000 strokes a year.

– International Journal of Stroke, 2009



Stem cells helped to rebuild after stroke: UK

Scientists have developed a tiny scaffold of stem cells to fill holes in the brain caused by damage from stroke. So far tested on rats only, the biodegradable balls loaded with stem cells were able to replace brain tissue in damaged areas within a week.

Previous research in injecting stem cells into rats with stroke damage has had some success but, because of the lack of structural support, the cells end up migrating into surrounding healthy tissue, researchers said.

To try to overcome this problem, researchers developed tiny polymer balls, a tenth of a millimeter across, and loaded them with neural stem cells. They then injected thousands of these into the void left behind when a stroke kills healthy brain tissue. The ready-made support structure helped the stem cells form new brain tissue in the cavity, the research team said.

– BBC News

Perrott strokes for stroke

Commonwealth Games multi-medallist, Rebecca Perrott, will be one of several famous New Zealand swimmers fundraising for charities in April 2010.

Rebecca will stroke for Stroke in a celebrity race to close off the Commonwealth Games selection meet in Auckland on Saturday 10 April.

According to Rebecca, her choice of charity for the swim event was easy because of her brush with Stroke eight years ago. At 39, Rebecca had a transient ischaemic attack (TIA) which was completely unexpected and left her baffled and frightened. "There is no family history, I was eating and training well. I had it all thoroughly checked out and the doctors could find no reason for the TIA – so it remains a mystery."

Naturally, this initially left Rebecca feeling a bit tentative in her training, but she is still swimming at least four times a week and competes in Masters competitions.

Her message to New Zealanders about stroke?

"While my TIA was completely unexpected, the crucial thing was that I followed it up and got myself tested. Too many New Zealanders don't know the symptoms of stroke, and then don't follow up on their TIAs. This can be fatal. So I say – please get familiar with stroke symptoms. And if you have a TIA – get it checked out immediately. This could save your life!"



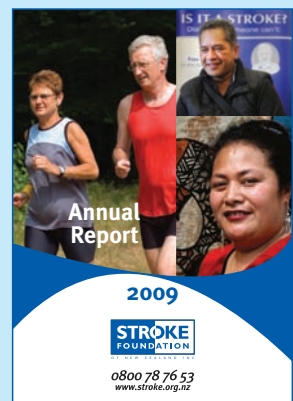
Rebecca represented New Zealand in the 1976 Montreal Olympics where she just missed medalling in the 400m freestyle with a 4th place. Two years later at the Commonwealth Games in Edmonton, she managed one gold, a silver and two bronze medals. The boycott of the 1980 Olympics in Moscow robbed Rebecca of the real possibility of an Olympic swimming medal. Rebecca was inducted into the NZ Sports Hall of Fame in 1990.



The Stroke Foundation has teamed up with Made From New Zealand to offer some very special t-shirts for blokes against strokes. Each of the tees has a great yarn attached – a thread of merino wool spun with one of the late Sir Edmund Hillary's climbing socks. Tees cost \$40, including GST and postage, and \$20 will go to the Stroke Foundation to help save lives and improve stroke outcomes. Order your t-shirt from www.4stroke.co.nz

2009 Annual Report

The Stroke Foundation's 2009 Annual Report is now available. It records a successful year for the Foundation in terms of increased support, awareness-raising and stroke outcome improvement throughout New Zealand. In spite of the economic recession – which has affected every charity in New Zealand – the Foundation is well placed to build on its successes in the coming year. To get a copy of the 2009 Report, either download a low resolution version from our website at www.stroke.org.nz or email strokenz@stroke.org.nz



Is it a Stroke? Act FAST. Call 111.



Stroke is a medical emergency.

TIA is often a warning that a more serious stroke could follow.

Local checks reveal higher blood pressure amongst public

Nearly half of those who had their blood pressure tested during Stroke Awareness Week showed raised blood pressure levels – far more than expected. According to the 2002/03 New Zealand Health Survey, one in five New Zealanders were thought to have high blood pressure. However, findings from these checks in September 2009 suggest rates may be much higher than previously thought.

To mark Stroke Awareness Week in September, the Stroke Foundation, St

John and Lions offered free blood pressure checks at over 100 supermarkets throughout the country on Saturday 12 September.

Blood pressure that is consistently above 140 over 90 is considered to be high. Normal blood pressure is around 120 over 80. In general, the lower blood pressure is, the better.

Of the 12,000 New Zealanders who took the blood pressure test, nearly one in two showed elevated blood pressure. For instance, checks in Ashburton showed

63 per cent of those tested had elevated pressure. Christchurch had 50 per cent and Waipukurau 57 per cent.

Stroke is New Zealand's second largest single cause of death. Annually, about 8000 New Zealanders have a stroke, and one third of these are caused by high blood pressure. The Stroke Foundation encourages people to have their blood pressure checked regularly.

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

