

Wednesday 13th November

DON'T LET STROKE BE YOUR FIRST SIGN OF ATRIAL FIBRILLATION: GET TESTED THIS AF AWARENESS WEEK

- *New device successful in detecting possible presence of life-threatening condition*
 - *New Zealanders can get their free check this AF Awareness Week*

The Stroke Foundation successfully detected atrial fibrillation (AF) for a local man during the Big Blood Pressure Check day at PAK'nSAVE Petone, where a site was set up to offer New Zealanders free AF tests alongside blood pressure checks. Continuing to provide free AF checks in the Wellington region, the Stroke Foundation will be present at Strathmore Park Community Centre and Countdown Porirua to mark global AF Awareness Week (18 – 24 November).

AF is the most common sustained cardiac arrhythmia and is a major risk factor for stroke, transient ischemic attack (TIA) and heart failure.

Local man, Mark Rakuraku of Lower Hutt, is encouraging others to take up the free check after the Stroke Foundation detected his heart beating irregularly.

Mark explained, "I'd had a mild stroke back in 2014 but got out of the habit of having my annual blood pressure and pulse check. I hadn't intended on getting a check that day, but I'm glad I did. I was encouraged to see a doctor immediately so I could learn more about my condition and how to better manage it."

The Stroke Foundation team followed up with Mark to ensure he visited the doctor and got the necessary information he needed. Mark is now taking medication for his high blood pressure and heart condition. He is also managing his lifestyle by eating healthier foods and exercising regularly.

At the time of his stroke in 2014, Mark was working long hours. Although he was taking medication following his stroke, he wasn't taking it correctly and didn't understand the impact this could have on his health.

"The Stroke Foundation team were particularly concerned about my heart rhythm. I booked an appointment to see the doctor and he provided me with lots of information and a diagram which clearly explained what AF is. The doctor also spoke to me about my medication and the importance of taking it to manage my high blood pressure and AF, reducing my risk of another stroke. I was very lucky that I saw the Stroke Foundation when I did, because otherwise I wouldn't have known about AF and the effect it was having on my health." Mark told us.

Julia Rout, Health Promotion Manager at the Stroke Foundation of New Zealand explained; "People with AF are up to five times more likely to have a stroke than those who do not. AF can be detected

easily with a simple pulse check that only takes 30 seconds. We're pleased that Mark was able to get the help he needed before it was too late. We hope this encourages others to do the same."

Free tests are being offered following the Stroke Foundation's successful pilot of a new device which fits in your pocket and can accurately detect the possible presence of AF in just 30 seconds. Since the pilot launched in September, around 100 New Zealanders have taken up the free check with hundreds more now having a better understanding of the link between AF and stroke.

Everyone over the age of 65 should have an annual pulse check. Those who identify as Māori or Pasifika and are over the age of 55, should get checked each year.

The Stroke Foundation team will be at Strathmore Park Community Centre Monday 18 November, 9:30am – 11:30am and Countdown Porirua Tuesday 19 November, 10am – 2pm.

The Stroke Foundation would like to acknowledge the support of Pelorus Trust.

For more information about atrial fibrillation please visit: <https://www.stroke.org.nz/atrial-fibrillation>

#GlobalAFAwareWeek2019

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About the Stroke Foundation of New Zealand

The Stroke Foundation is the only national charity in New Zealand focused on the prevention of and recovery from stroke. For almost 40 years we have actively promoted ways to avoid stroke and dedicated ourselves to working closely with stroke survivors across the country. The generosity of New Zealanders enables us to help thousands of stroke survivors every year; providing them with critical services to ensure the best possible outcomes - not just for themselves, but also their family/whānau and carers too. Three quarters of strokes are preventable, so we will continue our vital awareness campaigns and health promotion programmes - saving thousands of lives. To find out more about the important work the Stroke Foundation does go to www.stroke.org.nz.