



# BRACING FOR THE STROKE TSUNAMI

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MAY 2022

# STROKE BY THE NUMBERS

**9,500**

STROKES PER YEAR

**3,800**

Estimated additional strokes per year by 2028 (40% increase on 9,500 per annum)

**4,500**

STROKE SURVIVORS HELPED BY THE STROKE FOUNDATION EACH YEAR

**1.5 to 3X**

more Māori experiencing stroke as compared to non-Māori

**\$1,100,000,000**

Economic cost of stroke, per year



**10**

Countries are adopting the impactful and proven findings of the **Take Charge After Stroke**, the successful NZ-developed research programme (watchout: NZ is not one of them!)



**64,000**

PEOPLE LIVING WITH THE AFTER EFFECTS OF STROKE (ESTIMATED TO BE 350K SURVIVORS AND WHĀNAU)



**10,000**

NUMBER OF FREE BLOOD PRESSURE SCREENING TESTS STROKE FOUNDATION DID LAST YEAR

(UP TO ONE IN THIRTY OF THOSE SCREENED WERE IN ACUTE HYPERTENSIVE CRISIS, REQUIRING SPEEDY MEDICAL ATTENTION TO PREVENT STROKE)

**\$90 vs \$1026**

Amount of government funding received per stroke survivor seen by Stroke Foundation versus actual cost of delivering services.

**57**

NUMBER OF COUNTRIES WITH SALT TARGETS FOR PROCESSED FOOD

**\$11:\$1**

Return on investment for reducing population salt intake according to the World Health Organization's "best buys" for the prevention of stroke and other non-communicable diseases.

**1** YEAR

Optimum timeframe to achieve best stroke recovery is in the first year (so we have to get these early interventions right).

# WHAT IS A STROKE?

A stroke is a brain attack – a sudden interruption of blood flow due to clotting or hemorrhage. This causes **damage and death to brain cells**, resulting in an arrest of brain function. Possible long term impacts include sight, speech and everyday motor function.

## TWO PHASE FOCUS

Life before stroke | Life after stroke

**The mission of the Stroke Foundation of New Zealand is to prevent strokes, improve outcomes and save lives.**

Time spent in acute care for a person experiencing stroke can be relatively short, and usually less than 7 days; so, for the past 40 years our focus has been on the many years before and after.

Our work in the community provides essential services to reduce the burden of stroke on our society, with a specific emphasis on Māori and Pacific communities. We have supported improvements in blood pressure management and access to acute therapies through increased awareness of the signs of stroke. We have also helped thousands of survivors and their whānau rebuild their lives after stroke.

For some groups the risk of stroke has decreased, but there is a threat to this progress if Aotearoa doesn't prepare for the coming tsunami.

### Life before stroke

**Life before stroke is all about prevention.**

**Over 75% of strokes are preventable** as a result of simple lifestyle changes – especially around the consumption of salt, and with early and regular blood pressure screening.

According to the World Health Organization, one of the “best buys” in health is targeting the reduction of salt allowed in processed foods – this can return \$11 for every \$1 spent.

We prioritise **Māori and Pacific communities who are most at risk of stroke** – this is because this group is experiencing stroke at a younger age and because of inequity in the health system in terms of access to early intervention, information and services. This results in worse health outcomes.

**High blood pressure is the leading cause of stroke** and is a risk that can be significantly reduced through lifestyle changes or medication. We work to reduce the cost and convenience barriers to having a regular blood pressure and pulse check, through the provision of thousands of free checks through our mobile clinics that visit communities around the country. We also work to provide people with the tools to manage their blood pressure with health promotion initiatives.

**Up to 3% of people who receive one of our free blood pressure checks are in acute hypertensive crisis** and at immediate risk of stroke. We refer these people for emergency medical attention. Many others are found to be at high risk, often without knowing the dangers they face. High blood pressure may be silent until it is too late.

We advocate for and support public health policies which **make the healthier choice the easier choice**. We also co-lead the development of innovative initiatives to engage priority audiences – such as the national F.A.S.T. campaign. This critical campaign educates everyone on the signs of stroke and to act fast by calling 111 if they suspect a stroke. It is key to improving stroke outcomes because every second counts to save lives and improve recovery.

## Life after stroke

**Life after stroke is all about supporting people in the community, enabling them to have the best life possible after their stroke.**

Our services extend to all New Zealanders and to all stroke survivors and their families after stroke. We estimate that upwards of 350,000 New Zealanders (survivors and their whānau) are currently living with the impacts of stroke – that could mean challenges communicating, exercising, reading, socialising, eating or even just making a cup of tea.

Stroke is the most prevalent cause of adult disability in New Zealand and the long term impacts are often broad. However, many stroke survivors go on to live very full lives after stroke, when they get the proper care and intervention.

The Stroke Foundation has 28 Community Stroke Advisors (CSAs) across the country, providing free essential services to stroke survivors. That's 36,000 hours of direct support to people with stroke every year. Our CSAs work with stroke survivors, their whānau and carers, helping them to achieve the best possible outcomes for their lives after stroke.

**76% of stroke survivors who received our services said that they were able to achieve the goals that they set following support provided by the Foundation.**

Referrals to our CSA service in 2021 increased by 7% compared to 2020. Despite this, many stroke survivors are not referred to our service.

215 stroke survivors engaged in our Return to Work service in the last 12 months. 38% of these clients have been able to successfully return to work in the last year.

## Take Charge After Stroke

**The Kiwi programme that is succeeding overseas (but not funded here)**

Take Charge is a simple, person-centred, self-rehabilitation intervention for people discharged home after stroke. The published results of two large, randomised trials of Take Charge (one of which specifically included Māori and Pacific people after stroke) both showed impressive impact and effectiveness. Economic analysis of the programme shows that Take Charge is very cost-effective and probably cost saving. Despite being implemented overseas, the Foundation has no funding for this New Zealand designed and tested initiative. Instead, we are funding this ourselves, introducing a Take Charge pilot across the motu, to be delivered by our CSAs.

Around 50–60% of all people with stroke would benefit from the Take Charge approach. Results are even more impressive for Māori and Pacific, compared to other New Zealanders.

The fact that our international colleagues have seen the value in this homegrown approach, but that our health system hasn't prioritised it here, is a serious concern for the Foundation.

“  
*The Take Charge After Stroke session with my CSA made a big difference to how I thought about my stroke. I suddenly understood that the stroke did not define me and that I was someone who just happened to have stroke and had a life to live.*”

# MUCH MORE CAN BE DONE

WE NEED TO CHANGE THE WAY THAT WE PREVENT STROKE AND IMPROVE OUTCOMES FOR STROKE SURVIVORS IN AOTEAROA

We need:

- Support to introduce the New Zealand designed and evidenced Take Charge After Stroke intervention, with a **specific focus on our Māori and Pacific communities.**

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- Support to keep people well in their communities, **with a focus on priority regions**, particularly for blood pressure monitoring - currently we provide this service free of charge; a 100% funding gap.

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- Support for **government-led salt reduction targets** (and other food reformulation targets such as sugar) for a wide range of processed food categories, aiming for 80% compliance, to tackle the increasing numbers of stroke, exacerbated by high blood pressure.

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- Help to stop the “postcode lottery” by ensuring our Community Stroke Advisor service is routinely **part of the multi-disciplinary team in a nationally integrated and consistent stroke pathway**, so we can help all survivors and their whānau navigate and connect to the support and services they need in their life after stroke.

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- Help to ensure **sustainability of the Stroke Foundation’s service**, through improved funding, because if we aren’t here for our stroke affected communities, who will be?

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# OUR MISSION:

To prevent stroke, improve outcomes, and save lives.

# OUR VISION:

Is for a New Zealand where:

- significant steps are taken to reduce the number of strokes
- everyone understands and responds to the key risk factors
- anyone affected by stroke is supported and empowered.

# OUR VALUES:

## **Kaitiakitanga**

*Guard and protect stroke survivors and help people learn to detect and manage stroke risks early.*

## **Manaakitanga**

*Care for others and be inclusive to everyone. Act with integrity and treat people with respect.*

## **Rangatiratanga**

*Enable people to be decision makers over their own health and wellbeing and achieve their best health outcomes.*

## **Whanaungatanga**

*Connect as a whānau and work together in everything that we do to make a significant difference.*