



November 24, 2021

COVID-19 increases your stroke risk exponentially, says Stroke Foundation

The Stroke Foundation of New Zealand is urging all New Zealanders to be fully vaccinated to fight the risk of stroke. New international research shows that a COVID-19 infection increases your chances of having a stroke, and if you are unvaccinated that risk increases significantly.

The Foundation cites multiple studies showing that infection from COVID-19 substantially increases stroke risk by 3-10 times. There is also evidence that COVID-19 associated strokes could be more severe than non-COVID strokes.

Stroke is the largest cause of serious adult disability in New Zealand, as well as the second-largest single cause of death in the country, after cancer. With 75% of all strokes preventable, it is the Stroke Foundation's key objective to create awareness on how to reduce the risk of strokes.

Given the best data available, the Stroke Foundation concludes that COVID-19 vaccination is an effective stroke prevention strategy, and everyone in Aotearoa should be receiving the vaccine if they can.

Jo Lambert, Chief Executive of the Stroke Foundation, says, "The message is simple. Please listen to the science, because it is telling us that if you are infected with COVID-19, being vaccinated will greatly reduce your risk of having a stroke. If you get COVID-19, and are unlucky enough to have a stroke, being vaccinated will mean your stroke could be less severe."

The Stroke Foundation has also addressed misinformation that there is an increased risk of strokes for people who have taken the COVID-19 vaccine.

The Stroke Foundation cites the National Stroke Network's Chair, Dr Alan Davis, who has reported that there is no definitive evidence of an increase in the number of people affected by a stroke in Aotearoa over 2021. This is despite 3.9 million people in New Zealand receiving at least the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine developed by Pfizer-BioNTech.

- ENDS -

Sources

- Hippisley-Cox, Julia, et al. "Risk of thrombocytopenia and thromboembolism after covid-19 vaccination and SARS-CoV-2 positive testing: self-controlled case series study." *BMJ* (2021).
- AHA, "Stroke risk higher than expected among COVID-19 patients" (2021)
- *New England Journal of Medicine*, "Large-Vessel Stroke as a Presenting Feature of Covid-19 in the Young" (2020)

PO Box 12482, Wellington 6144 | 1st Floor Thorndon Rise, 95 - 99 Molesworth St, Wellington 6011
(04) 472 8099 | Freephone 0800 STROKE (0800 78 76 53) | strokenz@stroke.org.nz | www.stroke.org.nz
Charities Commission number CC49490

- Klok, F. A., et al. "Incidence of thrombotic complications in critically ill ICU patients with COVID-19." *Thrombosis research* 191 (2020)
- Llitjos, Jean-François, et al. "High incidence of venous thromboembolic events in anticoagulated severe COVID-19 patients." *Journal of Thrombosis and Haemostasis* (2020)

Media enquiries:

The Stroke Foundation of New Zealand

Alan John Koshy, Media and Communications Advisor, alan.koshy@stroke.org.nz / 027 506 9822

About the Stroke Foundation of New Zealand

The Stroke Foundation is a national charity in New Zealand focused on the prevention of and recovery from stroke. For over 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 Zealander's 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. To find out more about the Stroke Foundation, go to www.stroke.org.nz