

# World Stroke Day highlights the importance of thinking F.A.S.T.

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Just like we know “Slip, Slop, Slap” or “Drop, Cover, Hold”, more New Zealanders need to know about the F.A.S.T. message in identifying strokes.

F stands for face drooping, A for arm weakness, S for speech difficulty and T for take action. If any of the three signs of stroke or a combination of them are noticed, then 111 should be dialled immediately.

The Stroke Foundation of NZ is marking World Stroke Day on Saturday, 29 October, by reminding people that when it comes to stroke, minutes can save lives.

“More than 9,500 strokes are occurring each year, and it is no longer an issue just affecting older people,” says Jo Lambert, Chief Executive of the Stroke Foundation.

“We encourage people to think about F.A.S.T., as that knowledge could help them save the life of someone they know,” she added.

To spread the F.A.S.T. message, the Foundation is sharing four distinct stories of New Zealanders from diverse backgrounds.

## Pete Cronshaw

Journalist and TV Producer, Pete Cronshaw, was heading on a walk with his 19-year-old daughter when his speech suddenly started slurring and his face started drooping. Although his symptoms quickly faded, Pete’s daughter took him to the emergency room when he experienced the same symptoms a few hours later.

“Common sense goes out the window when your brain is under attack. I knew the warning signs. I knew something was seriously wrong and suspected I was having a stroke. Still, I went into denial! You can’t rely on your own training and knowledge. My daughter did everything right. It is the people around you that will ultimately save your life when you suffer a stroke.”

Pete had suffered two Transient Ischemic Attacks (TIAs). TIAs are often referred to as mini-strokes and don’t normally result in permanent damage. Pete was discharged and cleared to head home. Less than 24 hours later, he experienced a devastating stroke while he was asleep, which affected his speech for a few months.

## Margaret Broughton

It was the week before Christmas 2020, and Margaret Broughton was combing her granddaughter Katya's hair when they both became aware that Margaret's speech had started to slur. Alarmed, she tried to stand up, lost her balance and fell to the floor.

4-year-old Katya knew something wasn't right with her Māmā Margaret and ran to her Pāpā, Nga, for help. Nga found Margaret lying unresponsive on the floor, and although he wasn't aware that she was having a stroke, he called an ambulance.

Thanks to Katya and Nga's quick actions and fast access to treatment, Margaret has had a positive outcome for her stroke. In 1999, Margaret's sister Tina passed away from a stroke at the young age of 38.

#### Hannah Paterson

Hannah Paterson was only 31 years old when she experienced a stroke on August 1, earlier this year. A primary school teacher and artist, Hannah experienced her stroke while she was leading a reading group in her classroom.

"I was sitting on the floor with a group of kids when I felt the walls closing in and sensed my sound become warped like I was plunged underwater. I knew something was really wrong when I looked down and saw my left hand resting on my chest but could not feel it," Hannah reveals.

"I experienced all three of the F.A.S.T. signs (face drooping, arm weakness and speech difficulty) but there was a short delay before we called 111. Knowing what I know now, I would call immediately," Hannah reflects.

#### Lauano Akeli

In January 2022, Lauano Akeli experienced a stroke at home as he was making himself a cup of tea. The symptoms came on suddenly – he experienced sudden weakness in his arm when trying to pick up his mug.

"I went to go stand up, lifted the cup and it fell. I tried holding the cup, lifting it again and it fell again. I put the cup down and tried to lift my leg and it wouldn't move," Lauano remembers.

Lauano Akeli's wife Telesia was frightened when she saw his face and eyes drooping. Instead of calling an ambulance, however, the family tried to use the traditional method of healing (Samoan fofo).

Because of the unfortunate delay in seeking medical attention, the damage caused by a lack of oxygen to the brain for that extent of time has affected Lauano's recovery. The family is looking to raise awareness and encourage other Pacific peoples to learn the key signs of a stroke, how to act F.A.S.T and how to reduce the risks.

- ENDS -

#### Notes to editors:

- While stroke is the leading cause of disability and the second-biggest single cause of death in New Zealand for all adults, indigenous, and ethnic minority groups are disproportionately impacted.
- Ultimately, 75% of all strokes are preventable and high blood pressure is the leading risk factor for stroke, that is modifiable.

- According to the latest population statistics, there could be more than 1 million New Zealanders living with high blood pressure.

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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 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. To find out more about the Stroke Foundation, go to [www.stroke.org.nz](http://www.stroke.org.nz)