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Stroke Foundation rolls out free training to raise awareness of the signs of stroke

The Stroke Foundation of New Zealand has developed free training for community organisations as well as a free toolkit for workplaces, to help educate people on how to identify a stroke and take action to reduce harm.

Funded by Te Hiringa Hauora and the Ministry of Health, the Foundation has developed face-to-face and online training modules to be rolled out to community-based organisations about the F.A.S.T. signs of a stroke, so that they, in turn, can spread the word and educate the communities they work with.

A self-guided toolkit promoting how to identify a stroke has also been produced, that workplaces can add to their existing Health & Safety programme.

Spreading the message about the F.A.S.T. acronym is essential to reduce the impact of stroke because the simple message successfully identifies around 80% of strokes (2003). When it comes to reducing the effects of stroke, every second counts.

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

By empowering workplaces and community workers to identify and share the signs of stroke, the objectives of the Stroke Foundation, Te Hiringa Hauora and the Ministry of Health are to educate far and wide, to improve stroke awareness and reduce disabilities and deaths stemming from this devastating disease.

Stroke is New Zealand's leading cause of adult disability and the second-biggest single cause of death, claiming 2,000 lives every year (2018).

Using training to reduce health inequities

There will be a particular focus on promoting the workplace toolkit and training programmes to large employers and community-centric organisations that actively engage with and support Māori and Pacific communities.

In our Māori and Pacific communities, strokes occur 10 – 15 years younger than for other members of the population. This means that for Māori and Pacific people, if they survive their stroke, they live

longer with the effects of stroke on their lives, and there is likely to be a greater impact on their whanau. This is a statistic that we are dedicated to reversing.

"We want to put the power back in the hands of our communities, arming them with the right information that could save the life of a loved one or a colleague, especially in our Māori and Pacific communities," says Jo Lambert, Stroke Foundation's Chief Executive.

"We are excited to support others to make a difference in their communities, working in collaboration across Aotearoa to spread the F.A.S.T. message widely. With Health and Safety practices now a priority in every workplace, we believe our new F.A.S.T. training and toolkits will complement employers' existing health and wellbeing initiatives, with the potential to save lives and improve the health outcomes of their employees and whanau," Lambert concluded.

- ENDS -

Sources

- Miller, M. T., Pasquale, M. D., Bromberg, W. J., Wasser, T. E., & Cox, J. (2003). Not so FAST. *Journal of Trauma and Acute Care Surgery*.
- Ministry of Health (2018) Mortality (numbers and rates) from common causes of death by sex and ethnicity.

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.
- Typically, an ischaemic stroke is caused by a blood clot travelling to the brain, restricting oxygen supply, and killing vital brain cells. In the treatment of such strokes, if treatment teams know when the onset of symptoms occurred, there is a "golden window" of opportunity of 3 to 4.5 hours when most symptoms can be reversed through a tissue plasminogen activator (tPA) injection. If it is too late, however, medical teams cannot administer this life-saving dose as it can cause potentially lethal bleeding if injected outside the "golden window". It is estimated that the typical patient loses 1.9 million neurons each minute (2006) in which stroke is untreated (Saver, J. L. (2006). *Time is brain quantified*. Stroke.)
- The training modules and toolkits developed by the Stroke Foundation are funded by Te Hīringa Hauora and the Ministry of Health.

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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/whanau and carers too. To find out more about the Stroke Foundation, go to www.stroke.org.nz