

PENSTROKES

REDUCING RISKS, IMPROVING OUTCOMES



Arming themselves against stroke

More than 13,000 New Zealanders have armed themselves against stroke – as part of our annual Big Blood Pressure Check.

And around 1000 of those people have been advised to get follow-up medical advice as a result – a potentially life-saving intervention.

This year's check – the 10th – was held at 125 sites around the country on 6 October.

High blood pressure is the leading cause of stroke but many people don't know they have it. So the free test is really important in helping keep Kiwis safe.

In fact, a third of participants couldn't remember when they last had a blood pressure check, or whether they'd had one at all.

As the risk of stroke increases as we age, it was gratifying to see 35% of participants were aged between 50 and 65, and 27% were 66 or over.

It was also pleasing to see a range of nationalities and ethnic communities taking part.

“The Big Blood Pressure Check has been a key part of health promotion work over the last decade,” Stroke Foundation CEO Mark Vivian says.

“Well over 100,000 New Zealanders have had a free test, and it's helped keep many families safe from stroke.”

To celebrate the 10th anniversary, we also launched our Big Blood Pressure Van, which has been touring the South Island and will head north soon.



Above: A family takes part in the Big Blood Pressure Check at Pak 'N Save in Mangere



The van – made possible with support from Ryman Healthcare - has been a talking point in many centres it's visited.

Blood pressure will continue to be a focus of our work next year.

We are particularly grateful to our friends Pak 'N Save, New World, St John, Wellington Free Ambulance, Rotary and stroke clubs for their support.

Another great year - bring on 2019!

Mark Vivian, Stroke Foundation CEO

It's hard to believe that another year is nearly over!

But when I think of how much we've achieved this year, no wonder it's flown by.

It's been a big 12 months with lots of successes and innovations.

Like our Big Blood Pressure Van. This mobile blood pressure testing unit has been travelling around the South Island, giving a free check to thousands of Kiwis.

That's a simple test that could save them from stroke – it could even save their life.

Next up it's the North Island, and we're really excited about reaching communities with a high risk of stroke, and helping keep them safe.

It's all been made possible with the incredible support of Ryman Healthcare, who have been a brilliant partner to us this year.

We've also got a great new website, after our previous one was showing its age and limitations.

The new site looks great and is a goldmine of easy-to-find information. It's another way we are helping support stroke survivors and their families, as well as helping people learn and safeguard themselves against stroke.

We had another highly successful FAST campaign, this year making the slight change to the Face, Arm, Speech message with the T standing for Take action, call 111 instead of Time.

It's been really gratifying to hear from people who ring or email our office to say that simple message helped save them, or a loved one, when they had a stroke.

Stroke Week and the Big Blood Pressure Check were also great successes, and our many appearances in the media – on TV, online and in newspapers – have



Community Stroke Advisor Jo Kelly (left) carries out a free check at a Pak 'N Save supermarket as part of the Big Blood Pressure Check.



South Islanders queue up to get their blood pressure tested at our van – made possible by Ryman Healthcare



Jill Hooper (front, left) told her stroke story to the NZ Herald as part of the FAST campaign.

helped keep stroke on the national radar.

I'd like to wish you all a very happy and prosperous Christmas and New Year, and a very relaxing summer.

I'm looking forward to another big year next year!

FAST story's no Belgian waffle!

We're used to hearing how FAST has helped save a life – but we don't often hear how it helped someone on the other side of the world!

But that's what happened with Tony and Angela Herbert when they were in Bruges, Belgium on holiday, and Angela noticed something was very wrong with her husband.

"His eyes were dead, his face was drooping and he couldn't lift one arm. His speech was an awful noise. He had this scared look in his eyes," Angela says.

"He was trying to put one on his pajamas and he couldn't get one leg through. I saw him trying to lift his leg but he couldn't do it.

"I heard a voice in my head saying, 'FAST'. I'd seen the ad on television and Facebook.

"I said smile at me, lift your arm, speak to me.

"I knew straightaway it was a stroke so I ran to the concierge for help. An ambulance was there in 10 minutes and he was in the intensive care stroke unit within half an hour.

"That FAST message saved my husband's life."

FAST stands for Face drooping, Arm weakness, Speech difficulty, Take Action, call 111 immediately. A TV and social media campaign ran between July and September to promote the message.

Tony's speech and movement returned the next day and the husband and wife of 46 years are back home now and recovering well after their experience.

"The specialists said it was a spectacular recovery and he's getting better every day," Angela says.

Tony has had a scan at Auckland Hospital, and Angela says specialist Tony Barber confirmed that Tony's bleed had been "huge" and he was very lucky – something Angela agrees with.

"We are having a grandchild in March and it was like an angel calling down to Tony, 'you're not going yet.'"



The couple are also grateful for the timing of the stroke.

"If he'd had his stroke in his sleep I probably would have found him dead the next morning," Angela says.

"And the next day we were taking a ferry to Britain to see family, and it could have happened on board."

Tony says he was fit and well, and he has no idea what caused the stroke, "but it had been a long day, with the stress of driving on foreign roads."

Tony's no stranger to travel though, he's a classic car enthusiast, particularly Alfa Romeos and Lotus. He's even driven from Shanghai to London.

"I have repeated the story to as many friends and neighbours I could and hopefully if it happens to them or a loved one they will also know what to do," Angela says.

"Make sure you watch the advertisement and take notice of it."



Enjoying Life After Stroke

It's great to see what stroke survivors and stroke clubs have been up to!

Anti-clockwise from top left: 25 members of Oamaru Stroke Support enjoy entertainment by the Whitestone Line Dancers (including Debbie Huls, CSA for North Otago, circled); Members of the Glen Eden Stroke Club boost their memory playing Bingo; and stroke survivors Candice Donner and Peter Sanders scale the heights of Mauao (Mount Maunganui).

Great work everyone!



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