



## A YOUNG FAMILY LIVING WITH STROKE

**The holiday season should be a wonderful time of year, especially for a young family. You can only imagine the shock for Erykah and her husband when they discovered that one of their twin baby daughters, Ora, had experienced a stroke.**

It had been a difficult enough time for the family with their three-month-old twins in and out of hospital, but then a scan revealed that Ora had also had a stroke. Erykah was stunned. Ora hadn't shown any obvious symptoms.

"It was really hard for us to wrap our heads around," Erykah explained. "How could such a young baby have a stroke?"

Erykah knew little about stroke, other than the FAST advertising she'd seen. Needing to know more so she could help her little girl, Erykah discovered the Stroke Foundation online. She was quickly connected with a local Community Stroke Advisor (CSA).

"The CSA helped to give us more information about stroke and how to manage stroke with a child," Erykah continued.

The effects of stroke are different for everyone. For a baby, the after-effects often only emerge over time, which makes for a long and heart-aching wait for parents. When Ora was around eight months old, her mother started to notice the differences between her and her twin sister, Lumen.

"Ora couldn't sit straight like Lumen, she was always a little slumped," said Erykah remembering that time. "We also noticed that she would only use her left hand to reach for things and her right hand would just hang by her side." Fortunately, with the help of our CSA and the information Erykah received, she knew what to look out for and could keep an eye on Ora's progress.

Living with someone who has experienced a stroke affects the whole family. Ora's eldest sister, Elvie-Ella, was two years old when Ora suffered a stroke. Erykah said that it was difficult for Elvie-Ella to understand why Ora was

*Story continues inside...*

in and out of hospital and why she was getting a lot of attention from family members. It was a lot to take in for someone so young and this type of stress is quite common with siblings, especially around birthdays and Christmas when families spend a lot of precious time together.

Again, Erykah knew what to do and how to work through it. Elvie-Ella is now almost five and truly understands Ora's condition. "Elvie-Ella is great with Ora. She comes along to therapy classes and helps Ora to pick things up with her right hand. She's incredibly supportive," a proud Erykah explained.

Shortly after Christmas last year, the twins started to walk. Ora has been making fantastic progress ever since, quickly catching up with her twin sister and matching those milestone moments. The whole family are really looking forward to this holiday season.

"Ora has such an amazing personality, she's so cheeky and she's really driven. Having a twin has really helped her, and us too, as we've been able to better monitor her progress," Erykah told us. As Lumen has grown and developed, Ora has followed in her footsteps, copying her sibling.

Although there will still be challenges for Ora as she grows, Erykah is incredibly grateful for the tools she



received to help her family and ensure her daughter has the best possible life. Erykah wants to thank all those who support the Stroke Foundation so that every family in New Zealand can access the same support she received. Thanks to you, our CSA will be there whenever Erykah needs her.

## WHAT'S IT LIKE FOR STROKE SURVIVORS AT CHRISTMAS?

**Stroke can affect people in many ways and over Christmas it can be an emotional time for both those affected by stroke and their family members. We spoke to some of our Community Stroke Advisors to find out more about how those who have had a stroke feel during the festive season.**

### JUDITH

We often hear stories, particularly if it's the first Christmas post stroke, of how Christmas can bring back feelings of loss and grief because it isn't the same as what it used to be. Those affected by stroke feel that they can't do the things they used to be able to do. We work with them to understand that recovery is a process and that every step should be celebrated.

We also meet people who are incredibly grateful to have survived a stroke and are happy to be with their families at this time of year.

### PAULA

Those affected by stroke often feel isolated at Christmas. People around them get into the festive spirit, but they just feel overwhelmed and don't want to celebrate.

Fortunately, we are on hand to offer support all year round. We know this time of year can be particularly challenging so it's great to be able to work with them one-on-one.

### KATHY

Financial issues are more evident at Christmas time. Some people have income protection, but most people don't. Christmas can be an overwhelming time of year, but we are here to offer guidance and support. We also provide advocacy support if people are struggling to access services.

# RETURN TO WORK UPDATE

Our Return to Work service continues to go from strength to strength and has quickly become one of the most critical services for stroke survivors who were previously employed prior to having a stroke.

Getting back to work after a stroke can be an incredibly important part of a survivor's recovery. Returning to work offers financial independence, builds confidence and self-esteem and improves a sense of wellbeing.

We are proud to say that nearly 70% of those in the service, who were employed before having a stroke, have returned to work. This is an incredible statistic given that those affected by stroke often have to overcome a number of challenging obstacles on their journey to recovery.

Not only does Return to Work make an important difference to the lives of stroke survivors and their families, it continues to benefit the economy as a whole. We estimate that the results we have achieved to date will save more than \$22M per year in benefit payments.

In 2020, we plan to expand this vital service throughout the country.

**68%** of those on the service, who were employed before having a stroke, have returned to work.

Estimated that what we have achieved will save more than **\$22M** per year in benefit payments.

In **2020**, we plan to expand this vital service to more centres around New Zealand.

## MEET RACHELLE BARRETT, ONE OF OUR RETURN TO WORK ADVISORS

Rachelle Barrett is one of our Return to Work Advisors. Rachelle provides guidance and support to help those affected by stroke get back into employment.

When a new client joins our service, Rachelle carries out a full assessment to learn about an individual's skills and goals for returning to work. She then creates a tailor-made plan to suit the stroke survivor's needs. While working through the plan, Rachelle also works to ensure the right support is given.

"It's an incredibly valuable programme which helps both employees and employers," Rachelle explains. "I talk with employers so they can make returning to work as easy as possible. Many employers haven't had to deal with this sort of situation before, so I help them to understand and develop new pathways to support their employee."

Once back into work, people often start part time and then build up to the hours they were on before they had a stroke. During this time, Rachelle continues to support and monitor progress.

"It's an inspiration to see how stroke survivors learn to manage their situations and go on to reach their goals,"



says Rachelle. "Often their biggest goal is to return to work. It makes people feel useful again and many see it as one of the biggest parts of getting their life back."

# ART THERAPY CLASSES IN AUCKLAND

Our CSAs across the country are always looking for new or innovative initiatives to support those who have been affected by stroke.

Working closely with Māpura Studios in Central Auckland, stroke survivors have had the opportunity to take part in an art therapy programme called re-stART.

Those who have been affected by stroke often find it difficult to express themselves.

These classes significantly improve the psychological well-being of those affected by stroke and will help them to better communicate their stroke recovery.

They help to stimulate the senses and encourage self-exploration, self-expression, creativity and imagination to help with recovery. As the course progresses, it's incredible to see not only the changes in the stroke survivor's work, but also their outlook on life.

What started out as a one-off course nearly ten years ago, has now become a yearly, 12-week programme that the Stroke Foundation has supported and partly funded stroke survivors to attend.



Many people who take the course say that they have uncovered a new sense of creativity; some go on to join transitional courses to develop their skills and some even sell their art.

Jo, one of our Auckland CSAs, saw the success of the programme and has recently led the way in seeing it expand into South Auckland for the first time.

## BIG BLOOD PRESSURE CHECK 2019 UPDATE

Throughout October we offered New Zealanders across the country the chance to get their blood pressure checked for free as part of the annual Big Blood Pressure Check. We also introduced a new piece of technology to detect the presence of the heart condition atrial fibrillation (AF), which significantly increases the risk of stroke.

The Big Blood Pressure Check has again been a great success, kicking off activity on Saturday 5 October, where we had testing stations at 111 participating PAK'nSAVE and New World supermarkets.

We are also proud to announce that off the back of the successful AF trail, we will be rolling out five new AF testing devices across the country. We'll update you about the other locations where you can get your free test soon.

We're still receiving feedback about the campaign, but so far responses have been overwhelmingly positive:

"I went for a blood pressure check-up and found out that I have high blood pressure. I'm so thankful for this service and for being able to understand and manage my high blood pressure."

"The day was amazing, we had such a great turnout from the community."

We wouldn't have been able to offer these vital services without your support.

We'd also like to thank everyone who got behind our campaign and give a special thanks to our sponsors, Ryman Healthcare, New World, PAK'nSAVE, Wellington Free Ambulance, St John, Rotary, Unichem and Life Pharmacies.



# HOW ELSE CAN I GET INVOLVED?

## WAYS TO GIVE

### MONTHLY GIVING

A monthly gift, no matter how large or small, is a fantastic way to support our work today and also helps us to plan for the future.

To set up a payment, visit:

[www.stroke.org.nz/regulargiving](http://www.stroke.org.nz/regulargiving)

### IN CELEBRATION OR MEMORY

To celebrate a special event, or mark the passing of a loved one, you can provide a life-saving gift that will impact thousands of lives.

To give in memory or celebration, you can donate online at:

[www.stroke.org.nz](http://www.stroke.org.nz)

### GIFT IN WILL

Including the Stroke Foundation in your Will is a simple and effective way to create a legacy that will last beyond your lifetime.

To find out more, visit:

[www.stroke.org.nz/bequests](http://www.stroke.org.nz/bequests)

### SUPPORT US ANY TIME

Should the opportunity arise, you can support the Stroke Foundation at any time by donating online at:

[www.stroke.org.nz](http://www.stroke.org.nz)

## THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING US!



Your amazing support continues to mean so much to so many. Together we are saving lives. Wishing you a very Merry Christmas Season.  
- Robbie

Without a doubt, your support has helped save lives this year! Happy Holidays,  
Julia.

Every good wish to you this festive season, with much appreciation for your support this year.  
Mark Vivian, CEO

Thank you for all your support this year. Wishing you and your family a safe and happy Christmas.  
Monique.

Thank you for your support. Have a wonderful Christmas & Happy New Year!  
- Donna



Merry Christmas

Thank you so much for your support and kindness. Happy Holidays!  
Molly

Thank you for your wonderful support, every bit goes a long way towards furthering the work of our organisation. Wishing you & your family a Merry Christmas!  
- Becky

Happy Holidays from all of us at the Stroke Foundation! Your support makes a difference.  
- Shauna

Thank you for all your support this year! Wishing you and your loved ones a happy holiday!  
- Lauren

Ka nui te mihi ki a Koutou katoa! Thank you all for your support. Meri Kirihimete! Ngā manaakitanga

Wishing you & your loved ones a merry Christmas & a relaxing holiday. Your support during 2019 has been sincerely appreciated.  
Ginny



## CEO MARK VIVIAN

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With Christmas and the New Year just a few weeks away, I've been looking back on 2019 and realised just how much the Stroke Foundation has done and what we are looking forward to achieving in the New Year.

We utilised new technology and resources to help spread our health promotion messages and we'll continue to do so in 2020. Our atrial fibrillation trial was a great success and the fact that we are now able to roll out this potentially life-saving service across the country is a fantastic achievement.

Another great achievement was expanding on the stroke prevention work we do around our Big Blood Pressure Check. This year's campaign lasted the whole month of October and our Big Blood Pressure Check Van hit the road, offering free blood pressure checks to communities across the North Island. We also introduced our Beanie Up campaign and encouraged New Zealanders to buy a beanie to support stroke survivors around the country.

Looking ahead, we want to invest more in our CSA and Return to Work services and develop our initiatives further, so that we can help even more people who have been affected by stroke. We know that the work we are doing is having an incredibly positive impact and the more we do, the greater results we'll see.

It's thanks to your ongoing support that we have been able to advance our services across the country, better meeting the needs of those who have been affected by stroke, their families and help people avoid a stroke altogether. We look forward to the work we will continue to do together next year.

We wish you and your family a happy and safe holiday season.



## REGIONAL NEWS

### NORTHERN

The Stroke Foundation was selected at three Z Energy stations in the Northern region for this year's 'Good in the Hood' campaign. Our team visited these stations to encourage people to vote and help us to win a portion of the \$4,000 donation.

We even had our Big Blood Pressure Check Van visit Z Silverdale for the day to give local New Zealanders more information about the work we do and the services we run.

### MIDLAND

The Midland's team have just celebrated their first year of being in the Kollektive offices – the largest co-working space in New Zealand, dedicated to not-for-profits and charitable organisations. To mark the year anniversary, each workspace was asked to bake a cake as part of a competition between the organisations. The Stroke Foundation's workspace took first place, winning for their incredible rainbow cake.

### SOUTHERN

The Canterbury District Health Board admits over a thousand people to hospital following a stroke each year, leading to a high demand for our Community Stroke Advisor (CSA) service in the Christchurch/North Canterbury region.

To meet this demand, the Stroke Foundation has increased the CSA resource in the Christchurch office by 60%. Christine Wyles recently joined our team to support stroke survivors and their family/whānau and carers. The additional resource allows us to develop new CSA led services, focusing on education workshops and peer support networks for stroke survivors and family/whānau members.