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THE STROKE FOUNDATION TRIALS NEW TECHNOLOGY TO DETECT ATRIAL FIBRILLATION

New Zealanders to trial new test for free at the Wellington Emergency Services Expo

In the lead up to the Stroke Foundation of New Zealand's Big Blood Pressure Check, the organisation will be offering New Zealanders the chance to get tested for atrial fibrillation at the Wellington Emergency Services Expo this Saturday.

People with atrial fibrillation (AF) are five times more likely to have a stroke than those who do not. This new, portable piece of technology can identify the potentially life-threatening condition, simply by measuring a person's heart rhythm. The Stroke Foundation says that the device – which can be used with most smartphones – can detect an irregular heartbeat, which can lead to a stroke.

The pocket-sized device features an electrocardiogram or ECG. Two fingers are placed on the electrodes and the device records the heart's rhythm. A reading is then sent directly to a mobile app within 30 seconds showing if the heart rhythm is normal or if possible AF has been detected.

When a person has AF, the electrical signals near the heart's natural pacemaker become erratic, causing the heart rhythm to become irregular. AF also prevents the two smaller chambers of the heart – the atria – from contracting properly. This creates a risk of blood clots forming within this part of the heart, increasing the risk of stroke.

With 75 percent of strokes avoidable, the Stroke Foundation has invested in this technology to provide a free service to more New Zealanders, helping them to avoid a stroke.

"A person can have atrial fibrillation and not notice any symptoms. This new device is a really simple way of detecting an irregular heartbeat and may be the key to protecting thousands of New Zealanders from stroke." Explains Mark Vivian, Stroke Foundation of New Zealand CEO.

"It's a great example of how modern technology is being used to easily solve an issue that has affected so many. If the trial proves successful, we hope to be able to roll out the free test across more sites as part of our Big Blood Pressure Check which will run throughout October. Like high blood pressure many people are unaware they have AF and this simple test could be a life saver."

Everyone over the age of 65 should have an annual pulse check. Those who identify as Māori or Pasifika and are over the age of 55, should get checked each year.

The Stroke Foundation team will be at the Wellington Emergency Services Expo at Te Papa on Saturday 28th September 2019, offering free AF testing and free blood pressure checks from 11am – 2pm.

For more information about atrial fibrillation please visit: <https://www.stroke.org.nz/atrial-fibrillation>

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About the Stroke Foundation of New Zealand

The Stroke Foundation is the national organisation in New Zealand dedicated to reducing the incidence of stroke, improving outcomes, and supporting those affected by stroke. The Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation that supports a team of Community Stroke Advisors and Stroke Clubs throughout New Zealand. To find out more about the important work the Stroke Foundation does go to www.stroke.org.nz.