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Not recognising stroke signs puts men at risk

Australian men need to know more about stroke – a major killer in Australia.

An Australia-wide survey by the National Stroke Foundation (NSF) shows that the male population has a lower awareness and understanding of stroke.

The Stroke Foundation plans to target men who may be more likely to suffer a stroke than women because:

- fewer recognise the signs of a stroke
- more confuse a stroke with a heart condition.

NSF Chief Executive Officer, Dr Erin Lalor says the lack of knowledge amongst males is a great concern and the Foundation will focus on educating men during National Stroke Week in September.

“Understanding what a stroke is and being able to recognise the early signs will save lives.”

The national survey shows that about 1 in 5 Australians cannot name any signs of stroke. But the survey indicates an overall increase in the number who understands that stroke is a condition linked with the brain.

Dr Lalor says this offers hope for increasing stroke awareness and its warning signs but more education is needed to get Australians to recognise when they are having a stroke so they can get to hospital faster and reduce brain damage.

“Stroke is unique to the brain – it occurs when the supply of blood to the brain is disrupted. A stroke is not a heart attack.”

Dr Lalor says the good news is that stroke is preventable and treatable. Stroke risk can be reduced by keeping blood pressure low, quitting smoking, healthy eating and exercising regularly – “but equally important is recognising a stroke if you are having one”.

Early signs of stroke include:

- Weakness, numbness or paralysis – in the face, arm or leg on either or both sides of the body
- Difficulty speaking or understanding
- Dizziness, loss of balance or unexplained fall
- Loss of vision, sudden blurred or decreased vision in one or both eyes
- Headache – usually severe and of abrupt onset or unexplained change in the pattern of headaches
- Difficulty swallowing.

These signs may occur alone or together. They can last a few seconds or up to 24 hours. If you, or someone you know experiences any one of the signs, get medical attention immediately.

The National Stroke Foundation is a not for profit organisation dedicated to reducing stroke in Australia through four key priority areas: 1. Prevention. 2. Improving treatment. 3. Improving life after stroke. 4. Research.

The National Stroke Report 2006 is available online at www.strokefoundation.com.au

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