

# media release



HMRI @ John Hunter Hospital

**Thursday 29 October 2009**

## **World Stroke Day: What can I Do?**

During Stroke Awareness Week in September, media stories and advertisements about the warning symptoms for Stroke seeped into the collective consciousness in communities all around Australia.

At home in the Upper Hunter town of Aberdeen, Tressa Tiller, 65, was having a shower when she noticed her right arm wouldn't work properly. She got out of the shower and went to sit on her bed, but slid off.

She managed to ring her daughter and as she spoke on the phone noticed that her speech was slurred. As she spoke she recalled seeing an ad on TV and a discussion on local radio from the day before, describing the symptoms of stroke, and now recognised she was experiencing these symptoms in herself.

She told her daughter that she must be having a stroke and that she should call an ambulance immediately. Despite her daughter suggesting that it must be something else – anything but a stroke – she insisted that it was a stroke and that she call triple 000.

That was the right thing to do. Because of this quick response Tressa was able to access life saving clot busting treatment as part of an Australian first research trial being conducted by the Hunter Medical Research Institute (HMRI) Stroke Research Group.

The trial aims to deliver the treatment to rural stroke patients in the Upper Hunter, Great Lakes and Lower Manning areas of NSW by transporting them by air or road to John Hunter Hospital in Newcastle to overcome the time barrier for effective use of the clot busting treatment.

Rural paramedics were able to transfer Tressa to John Hunter Hospital by helicopter, ensuring vital minutes were saved so that she arrived at hospital in time to receive a clot-busting drug that broke up the blood clot in her brain that was causing the stroke.

Her symptoms started to disappear during the treatment.

A few days later and the only signs of her ordeal are a very slight slurring of a few words and a tiny twist at the corner of her mouth. She has regained full function of her right arm and leg.

Speaking the day after, she said: "I can't believe how everything just fell into place last night. And I also think that I am partly responsible because I listened to the stroke ad and I was able to recognise that I was having a stroke and that I should call an ambulance straight away. The ride in the helicopter was simply fantastic, I'll never forget it."

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"Tressa's story is a real example of the effectiveness of the FAST campaign and the impact it can have in saving lives," said Dr Erin Lalor, CEO of National Stroke Foundation.

"Today is World Stroke Day with the theme 'Stroke: what can I do?' to prompt individuals, groups and governments to take action against stroke. One simple thing everyone can do is remember the FAST way to recognise a stroke. Face, Arms, Speech, Time - think F.A.S.T act FAST. It could save a life."

**Media Opportunity:** Tressa Tiller and her daughter Teneal Pittman are available for interview.

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