



Canadian Stroke Network

Réseau canadien contre
les accidents cérébrovasculaires



HEART &
STROKE
FOUNDATION
OF CANADA

For release: Dec. 8, 2010

Recommendations will prevent stroke patients from falling through cracks

New website provides accessible information on optimal stroke care

OTTAWA - The 2010 Canadian Best Practice Recommendations for Stroke Care emphasize the need to prevent stroke patients from falling through the cracks as they move from the ER to in-hospital care to rehabilitation therapy and back to the community. The recommendations were released today by the Canadian Stroke Network and the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada.

“The adoption of these best practices will ensure stroke patients and families have rapid and seamless access to appropriate stroke services across the continuum and that they are well supported through these transitions,” says Patrice Lindsay, PhD, Director of Performance and Evaluation at the Canadian Stroke Network and one of the project leaders.

Among new recommendations:

- Blood pressure should be maintained at a level that is consistently lower than 140/90;
- Because atrial fibrillation (irregular heartbeat) increases stroke risk, patients with this condition should be closely monitored and the use of new drug therapies should be considered;
- Patients who have a mini-stroke (transient ischemic attack) should be referred immediately to a stroke specialist at a prevention clinic or to an emergency department due to increased risk of a major stroke;
- There should be more widespread use of telestroke – long-distance video and data hookups – between stroke specialists and communities where on-site stroke care does not exist; and
- Improved hospital discharge programs are needed, as well as better community services to enable people to return home sooner from hospital.

Thanks to earlier guidelines released in 2006 and 2008, more communities in Canada have an organized emergency response to stroke, stroke prevention clinics, specialized hospital stroke units, and improved rehabilitation services, all of which have been shown to save lives and reduce disability.

This is first time that this information has been pulled together in an easy-to-search and smart-phone friendly website – www.strokebestpractices.ca. The website includes resources to improve stroke and emergency services and to measure their effectiveness. It also includes a patient’s guide to optimal stroke care.

“Stroke is the third leading cause of death in Canada yet most strokes are preventable and treatable,” says Bobbe Wood, CEO of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada. “Increasing awareness is a key part of the Canadian Stroke Strategy. The best practices website will provide optimal stroke resources and tools to the public and professionals such as physicians, emergency personnel, nurses, rehabilitation specialists and health policymakers.”

The *Canadian Best Practice Recommendations for Stroke Care* was developed as part of the Canadian Stroke Strategy, an initiative of the Canadian Stroke Network and Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada to improve stroke care for people across the country. There are about 50,000 new strokes in Canada each year and 315,000 Canadians living with the after-effects of a stroke.

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The **Canadian Stroke Network** (canadianstrokenetwork.ca) brings together Canada’s leading scientists and clinicians to reduce the physical, social and economic impact of stroke on the lives of individual Canadians and on society as a whole. Headquartered at the University of Ottawa, the Canadian Stroke Network is one of Canada’s Networks of Centres of Excellence.

The **Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada** (heartandstroke.ca), a volunteer-based health charity, leads in eliminating heart disease and stroke and reducing their impact through the advancement of research and its application, the promotion of healthy living, and advocacy.

The **Canadian Stroke Strategy** (www.canadianstrokestrategy.ca) is a joint initiative of the Canadian Stroke Network and the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada. The goal of the Canadian Stroke Strategy is to help support an integrated approach to stroke prevention, treatment and rehabilitation in every province and territory by 2010.

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