



Canadian Stroke Network

Réseau Canadien contre
les accidents cérébrovasculaires

News Release

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Stroke recovery:

More community programs needed to fight one of Canada's leading health concerns

WINNIPEG, Sept. 13, 2007 – Community-based stroke programs – everything from exercise classes to craft groups – need to be part of the hospital discharge plan that stroke patients get along with their prescriptions, says a leading Canadian stroke researcher.

“Stroke is for life. And persons with stroke need life-long programs,” says Dr. Nancy Mayo, a professor at McGill University in Montreal, who today delivered the 2007 Ramon J. Hnatyshyn Lecture on stroke, sponsored by the Canadian Stroke Network (CSN).

As many as half of stroke recoverers report that they do not have a meaningful activity to fill their day after discharge from a hospital or rehabilitation program; and many are left feeling isolated, depressed and unwell. For those people, their health deteriorates and they shift from the ‘road to recovery’ to the path back to hospital.

Current thinking defines stroke recovery over a very short period of time and there is no funding for community-based resources. “We have an illness model of health care,” Dr. Mayo says. “Once you’re no longer in the illness ‘payment envelope’, you’re no longer a priority.” More needs to be done to support community efforts in order to ensure that people with stroke regain their health.

“Programs need to incorporate exercise, fun and opportunities for learning,” says Dr. Mayo, who leads a CSN-funded national study of community-based programs for people who’ve experienced a stroke. Researchers are studying programs in six cities to determine which ones are effective and why. “Programs have to create an environment where people are comfortable, where there are social relationships and a sense of belonging, where everyone has a defined role in the group.”

The CSN research initiative is a precursor to what will be the largest community stroke engagement project ever launched. It is the foundational work before a large-scale, multi-site trial of community programs can be established.

Every year, 50,000 Canadians have a stroke – one person every 10 minutes – and the incidence is rising with the aging population and the prevalence of uncontrolled risk factors, including high blood pressure, obesity, sedentary lifestyle and smoking. Stroke is a leading cause of adult disability in Canada.

The Ramon J. Hnatyshyn Lecture is presented annually in a different region of Canada. This is the first time the public lecture has been held in Manitoba. The lecture was named in honour of Canada’s 24th governor

general, who was a founding board member of the Canadian Stroke Network and a strong advocate of stroke research.

The **Canadian Stroke Network** is an independent, not-for-profit corporation. It was established in 1999 to reduce the burden of stroke through leadership in research innovation. It is made up of more than 100 of the country's best and brightest scientists, clinicians, rehabilitation specialists and knowledge-translation experts from universities and health-care centres across the country. Headquartered at the University of Ottawa, the Canadian Stroke Network brings together partners from government, industry and the non-profit sector.

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