

Treating People Right

Overcoming the Stigma of Mental Illness

Special points of interest:

- Stigma of Mental Illness
- National Stroke Month

Stigma is a very real problem for people who have a mental illness. Based on stereotypes, stigma is a negative judgment based on a personal trait in this case, having a mental health condition. It was once a common perception that having a mental illness was due to some kind of personal weakness. We now know mental health disorders have a biological basis and can be treated like any other health condition. Even so, we still have a long way to go to over-

come the many misconceptions, fears and biases people have about mental health, and stigma these attitudes create.

Stigma may be obvious and direct, such as someone making a negative remark about your mental health condition or your treatment. Or it can be subtle, such as someone assuming you could be violent or dangerous because you have a mental health condition. These and other forms of stigma can lead to feelings of anger, frustration, shame



and low self-esteem. For someone with a mental illness, the consequences of stigma can be devastating. Some of the harmful effects of stigma include:

- Trying to pretend nothing is wrong
- Refusal to seek treat-



Approximately **795,000 strokes** will occur this year.

May is National Stroke Month

May is National Stroke Awareness month and the National Stroke Association is urging everyone to assist in raising public awareness of both the causes and prevention of stroke incidents.

Stop strokes, 80% of all strokes can be prevented! High blood pressure is the number one cause of stroke. Make

sure to have your blood pressure checked on a regular basis. In addition to high blood pressure, there are many other controllable factors that can contribute to and increase your risk for stroke including:

- Cholesterol. Know your number. If it is high work with your doctor to control it. Lowering your

cholesterol may reduce your stroke risk.

- Diabetes. If you are diabetic, follow your doctor's recommendations carefully as lifestyle changes and medicine can help control your diabetes.
- Smoking. Stop. Smoking doubles the risk for stroke. If you stop smok-



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- Rejection by family and friends
- Being subjected to physical violence or harassment
- Inadequate health insurance coverage of mental illness.

Learning to except your condition and recognize what you need to do to treat it, seeking support, and helping educate others can make a big difference. Here are some ways you can help cope with stigma:

- Get treatment, don't let the fear of being labeled with a mental illness prevent you from seeking diagnosis and treatment. Getting treatment can provide relief by identifying what's wrong and reducing symptoms that interfere with your work and personal life.
- Seek support, if you have a mental illness, it can be hard to decide who to tell, if anyone, and how much to tell. If you tell people that you trust, you may find much-needed compassion, support and acceptance.

If you or a loved one are seeking treatment for a mental health issue, please contact your Employee Assistance program by calling, (800) 937-7770 as we can put you in touch with a mental health professional who can assist with your mental health questions and treatment.

Continued ~ National Stroke Month

ing today, your risk for stroke will begin to decrease.

- **Alcohol Consumption.** Do so in moderation. A glass of wine or beer or one drink a day may lower your risk for stroke. Remember if you take medication alcohol can interact with other drugs you are taking, and alcohol is harmful if consumed in large doses. If you don't drink, don't start.
- **Obesity and excessive weight** put a strain on the entire circulatory system. They also make people more likely to have high cholesterol, high blood pressure and diabetes.

- **Heart Diseases.** Consult with your medical doctor for tips on managing your current health conditions.

Spread hope, for the six million stroke survivors living in America, many are not aware that recovery from stroke can be a lifelong journey. In fact, five, ten or even twenty years post-stroke, patients are regaining use of limbs and acquiring skills they thought were lost forever.

“Act Fast:”

F= Face, ask the person to smile, does one side of the face droop?

A= Arms, ask the person to

raise both arms does one arm drift downward?

S= Speech, ask the person to repeat a simple phrase. Does the speech sound slurred?

T= Time, if you observe any of these signs, then it's time to call 9-1-1.

Remember, acting FAST is key to receiving proper treatment.

Stroke 101

Below are some stroke facts:

- Stroke is a brain attack, cutting off vital blood flow and oxygen to the brain.
- In the U.S., stroke is the third leading cause of death, killing about 137,000 people each year.
- From 1996 to 2006, the stroke death rate fell 33.5% and the actual number of stroke deaths fell by 18%.
- Approximately 795,000 strokes will occur this year.
- Stroke can happen to anyone, regardless of race, sex or age.
- Men's stroke incidence rates are greater than women's at younger ages, but not older ages.
- African Americans have almost twice the risk of first-ever stroke compared with whites.

Types of Stroke:

Ischemic stroke occurs when arteries are blocked by blood clots or by the gradual build-up of plaque/fatty deposits. 87% all strokes are ischemic.

Hemorrhagic stroke, occurs when blood vessel in the brain breaks leaking blood into the brain. This type account for 13% of all strokes, yet responsible for more than 30% of all stroke deaths.

Two million brain cells die every minute during stroke, increasing risk of permanent brain damage, disability or death. Recognizing symptoms and acting fast to get medical attention can save a life

and limit disabilities.

The prevalence of transient ischemic attacks (TIA) increases with age. Up to 40% of all people who suffer a TIA will go on to experience a stroke.

The estimated direct and indirect cost of stroke for 2010 is \$73.7 billion.

Stroke Strikes Fast. You should call 9-1-1.

Common stroke symptoms include:

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg— especially on one side of the body.
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding.
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination.
- Sudden severe headache with no known cause.

Reducing Stroke Risk

Everyone has some stroke risk. Some risk factors are beyond our control, including:

- Being over age 55
- Being a male. Stroke more common in men than women at younger ages, yet women experience strokes at older ages and more women than men die from stroke.
- Being African-American, having diabetes and having a family history of stroke.

If you have one of these risk factors, it is even more important that you learn about the lifestyle and

medial changes you can make to prevent a stroke.

Public Stroke Prevention Guidelines

1. Know your blood pressure. If it is elevated, work with your doctor to keep it under control. High blood pressure leading cause of stroke. Have your blood pressure checked at least once each year— more often if you have a history of high blood pressure.
2. Find out if you have atrial fibrillation (AF). If you have AF work with your doctor to manage it. AF can cause blood to collect in the chambers of your heart. This blood can form clots and cause a stroke. Your doctor can detect AF by carefully checking your pulse.
3. If you smoke, stop. Smoking doubles the risk for stroke. If you stop smoking today, your risk for stroke will begin to decrease.
4. If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation. Drinking a glass of wine or beer or one drink each day may lower your risk for stroke (provided that there is no other medical reason you should avoid alcohol). Remember that alcohol is a drug— it can interact with other drugs you are taking and alcohol is harmful if taken in large doses. If you don't drink— "don't start".

Stroke 101

5. Know your cholesterol number.

If it is high, work with your doctor to control it. Lowering your cholesterol may reduce your stroke risk. High cholesterol can also indirectly increase stroke risk by putting you at greater risk of heart disease— and important stroke risk factor. Often times, high cholesterol can be controlled with diet and exercise; some individuals may require medication.

6. Control your diabetes.

If you are diabetic, follow your doctor's recommendations carefully because diabetes puts you at an increased risk for stroke.

7. Include exercise in your daily routine.

A brisk walk, swim or other exercise activity for as little as 30 minutes a day can improve your health in many ways and may reduce your risk for stroke.

8. Enjoy a lower sodium (salt) fat diet. By cutting down on sodium and fat in your diet, you may be able to lower your blood pressure and, most importantly, lower your risk for stroke.

9. Ask your doctor if you have circulation problems.

If so, work with your health provider to control them. Fatty deposits can block arteries that carry blood from your heart to your brain. Sickle cell disease, severe anemia, or other diseases can cause stroke if left untreated.

10. If you have any stroke symptoms, seek immediate medical attention.

(Courtesy of 2010 National Stroke Association)