



spotlight on health

A Quick Response Is Key to Stroke Recovery

(NAPSA)—Most people call 9-1-1 if they have a heart attack, but what about a “brain attack”?

A stroke, or “brain attack,” kills brain cells. To minimize the stroke damage, a patient must get to the hospital fast, even if the symptoms are temporary.

According to the National Stroke Association, every year, three-quarters of a million Americans suffer a stroke. Stroke occurs when a blood vessel is blocked or breaks, damaging brain cells and causing disability or death.

“The most important thing in limiting the effects of stroke is rapid treatment,” said Dr. Al Anderson of the VA Hospital in Denver.

Kay Chilberg says she is living proof that getting to the hospital quickly can make a huge difference for stroke patients. Less than a year ago, she stood in her kitchen fixing her daily cup of coffee. Chilberg, 47, didn’t know that her life was about to dramatically change.

“I couldn’t talk. I couldn’t move my right side. I couldn’t see out of my right eye. And I wasn’t really sure what was going on,” she recalls. Knowing that something wasn’t right, her husband called 9-1-1.

Chilberg had suffered a massive stroke or “brain attack.” Doctors treated her with the drug Tissue Plasminogen Activator (t-PA). Approved in 1996 by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, t-PA can reduce and sometimes reverse the damage caused by an ischemic (a blood clot blocking an artery) stroke.

But t-PA must be administered within three hours of the first stroke symptom. Physicians

Stroke Symptoms

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



determine if patients are eligible for t-PA treatment, and hemorrhaging (bleeding) is a possible side effect.

“Time is the greatest challenge to stroke treatment,” said Patti Shwayder, Executive Director/CEO of National Stroke Association (NSA). “It’s critical patients and health care providers recognize stroke as a medical emergency. NSA wants patients to ask their doctors about stroke.”

Despite the severity of her stroke, Chilberg feels fortunate. “I had my stroke on a Friday and by the end of Saturday I could move my arms. I could move my legs, I could see. I could do pretty much everything,” she said.

Several acute stroke treatments are undergoing clinical studies. One study is investigating the possibility of expanding the time frame for immediate treatment to more than three hours.

For more information on stroke call 1-800-STROKES (1-800-787-6537) or visit www.stroke.org. National Stroke Association is a non-profit organization devoting 100 percent of its resources to stroke issues.