

# HEALTH UPDATE

## Hope For Stroke Prevention

(NAPS)—Stroke, the third leading cause of death in America, is also the leading cause of adult disability. Nearly four million Americans have survived a stroke and are living with the aftereffects.

An important warning sign of stroke is a TIA (transient ischemic attack), or “mini-stroke.” This condition develops when blood supply to the brain is briefly interrupted by the formation of tiny blood clots. A TIA can last anywhere from a few seconds to 24 hours. While a TIA does not kill brain cells or result in permanent brain damage, it is an indicator of an impending stroke.

A survey released in 2000 by the National Stroke Association estimates that about 1.2 million people in the U.S. may have already experienced a TIA without realizing it.

The risk of stroke increases ten-fold shortly after a TIA, and medical literature states that one-third of those who experience a TIA will also have a stroke.

An understanding of the warning signs and new recommendations for treatment options may help individuals who are at risk to avoid a stroke.

New treatment recommendations recently released by the American College of Chest Physicians (ACCP) in its Consensus Statement 2001, and published in the medical journal *Chest*, offer hope for stroke prevention.

According to the ACCP, a panel of experts recommends giving patients antiplatelet medication after stroke or TIA as a major step toward preventing a second stroke. Antiplatelet drugs such as Aggrenox®, aspirin, as well as Plavix®, are all acceptable options for initial therapy after stroke.

Antiplatelet drugs work to prevent blood cells (platelets) from

### Symptoms of TIA

Often, one or more of the following symptoms present at the same time:

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



forming into clots that can cause a stroke.

The 2001 recommendations demonstrate that newer antiplatelet drugs with improved effectiveness over aspirin are now available.

Beyond drug therapy for diagnosed, at-risk patients, lifestyle modifications can reduce the risk of stroke.

This includes stopping smoking, limiting alcohol intake, reducing salt and fat consumption, and controlling hypertension, among other steps.

Recognizing the symptoms of TIA and seeking immediate medical treatment by calling 911 are the first and most important steps in preventing more serious future conditions.

Given this new knowledge, stroke is now seen as the most preventable of life-threatening health problems.

For more information about the symptoms of stroke or TIA please call the National Stroke Association at: 1-800-STROKES.