

Health Awareness



Hispanic Americans At Increased Risk For Stroke

(NAPSA)—Every day is World Stroke Day. Stroke knows no boundaries and can happen to anyone regardless of age or gender with 15 million people worldwide suffering a stroke each year. Of those affected, approximately 5 million will die and another 5 million will be left permanently disabled. Knowing the signs and symptoms of stroke is important, especially for those who may be at increased risk.

In the United States, the Office of Minority Health reports that Hispanics ages 35 to 64 are more likely to suffer a stroke than non-Hispanic whites. Hispanics are also more likely to suffer a stroke at a younger age, as their average age for stroke is 67, compared to 80 for non-Hispanic whites.

Although many Americans do not know the signs and symptoms of stroke, research indicates this is especially true among Hispanic Americans. Cerebrovascular diseases, which include stroke, are the fourth-leading cause of death in Hispanics in the United States. Stroke or heart disease accounts for one in four deaths among Hispanic men and one in three deaths among Hispanic women, yet a study of 1,904 people suggests that many in this population do not recognize the signs and symptoms of stroke or realize the immediate need for medical attention.



Dr. Juan Fitz and his wife, Dina, who suffered a stroke but recovered after seeking immediate medical attention.

In a recent survey of 2,000 women about stroke, Hispanics were less aware of the signs and symptoms of stroke than Caucasians. Furthermore, in a separate study of 25,426 individuals, non-English-speaking Hispanic Americans, compared to those who spoke English, were also less likely to identify stroke signs and symptoms or be aware of the immediate need for medical attention.

“Stroke is a worldwide problem and here in the United States the risk of stroke is even greater for Hispanic Americans,” said Dr. Juan Fitz, assistant medical director, Emergency Department, Covenant Medical Center in Lubbock, TX. “It is important for members of our community to recognize the signs and symptoms of stroke and to call 9-1-1 if they believe a stroke is occurring.”

A stroke occurs when a blood vessel that carries blood and oxygen to the brain is blocked by plaque or a blood clot (acute ischemic stroke), or breaks (hemorrhagic stroke). The visible signs and symptoms of stroke include speech impairment, arm numbness and weakness, severe headache, sudden confusion, trouble seeing out of one or both eyes, as well as uncontrollable drooping of the face.

The F.A.S.T. Test

In the event that you or someone you know begins to show signs and symptoms of a stroke, the F.A.S.T. test can be used as a quick screening tool:

- **Face**—Ask the person to smile. Does one side of the face droop?
- **Arms**—Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?
- **Speech**—Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence. Are the words slurred? Can they repeat the sentence correctly?
- **Time**—If the person shows any of these symptoms, time is important. Immediate medical attention may limit the effects of stroke. Therefore, call 9-1-1 or get to the hospital immediately.

More Information

To learn more about stroke, see your doctor, visit www.stroke.org or www.emergencycareforyou.org or call (800) STROKES.