

## **Stroke - Fact Sheet**

Having previously campaigned on these important health subjects, the CWU Health, Safety & Environment Department has launched two fresh joint awareness campaigns with POFAS (Post Office First Aid Association), the Stroke Association, Diabetes UK and Royal Mail's Head of Health, utilising the 7,200 First Aiders in Royal Mail Group. Both charities were present at the recent POFAS National First Aid Championship Finals with Exhibition Stands, representatives and lots of information which was distributed. These information sheets are being issued and will hopefully be followed by articles in Voice, Courier, POFAS publications etc as the campaigns progress. Area Health and Safety Representatives are asked to do what they can to distribute information and raise awareness.

Stroke is the third biggest killer in the UK and the single largest cause of adult disability. But public awareness and recognition of the main signs of stroke are very low and, in response, a new National Stroke Strategy sets out the need to improve awareness of stroke. Around 150,000 people in the UK have a stroke every year and more than 67,000 die from it according to the Stroke Association who attended CWU Conference in 2007 and have worked closely with the CWU Health, Safety and Environment Department, campaigning to raise awareness over the last two years. Patients who have their stroke confirmed and are given clot-busting drugs and have higher chances of survival.

Acting quickly on important warning signs, like "minor strokes" - saves lives and reduces long-term disability.

Thousands of lives could be saved if patients were admitted straight to hospital and received medication.

Delays are due to patients not recognising or shrugging off stroke symptoms, or calling their GP rather than dialing 999.

Only around one in ten patients are getting the drugs within three hours of the onset of stroke symptoms, as set down in NHS guidelines.

For every minute of delay you can lose about 1,000 miles of nerve fibres in the brain. Stroke, a loss of brain function due to a clot or bleed in the brain, is the third leading cause of death and the single largest cause of adult disability in England.

Stroke accounts for nine per cent of deaths in men and 13 per cent of deaths in women in the UK, and three times as many women die from stroke than breast cancer.

Improving public awareness of the signs of stroke is therefore a key element of the government's new National Stroke Strategy.

The CWU Health, Safety and Environment supported the Stroke Association in lobbying

for the Government to adopt the "FAST" campaign which succeeded when CWU former General Secretary and now Government Health Secretary Alan Johnson MP recently launched a major three-year campaign aimed at increasing awareness. The Campaign involves adverts, on TV, radio, online and in the press, showing stroke "spreading like fire in the brain" to illustrate that swift emergency action can limit damage and dramatically increase a person's chances of surviving and of avoiding long-term disability, informing the public about FAST – Face, Arm, Speech, Time to call 999. FAST is a simple test to help people to recognise the signs of stroke and understand the importance of fast emergency treatment.

Health Secretary Alan Johnson MP says that "despite a big improvement in services, stroke still kills over 67,000 people in the UK each year and leaves thousands more disabled. In many cases, death or disability from stroke can be avoided but recognition of these early warning signs is crucial. As well as saving lives, the cost saving to the NHS as a result of this campaign will be significant. Direct stroke care costs the NHS £2.8 billion a year, and the wider economy a further £1.8 billion in income and productivity losses as a result of disability. The informal care cost is £2.4 billion."

CWU National Health, Safety and Environment Officer Dave Joyce said "We want to help promote awareness amongst our members of the "FAST" test - Face, Arm, Speech, Time - to gauge symptoms, including facial weakness, inability to raise both arms and whether somebody can speak or understand what is being said to them. I hope the campaign will help make sure that people having a stroke and those around them can recognise the signs and appreciate the need for fast emergency treatment. The faster a stroke patient receives emergency treatment, the better their chances are of surviving and minimising long-term disability. The Department of Health's stroke awareness campaign will boost public understanding of stroke, its symptoms and treating it as a medical emergency which will I hope significantly improve the chances of recovery for the people who have a stroke every year in the UK, reducing avoidable deaths and we want to support the campaign as much as we can."

#### 10 things you should know about Stroke

1. Every five minutes someone in the UK has a stroke.
2. A stroke is a brain attack. A stroke happens due to a clot or bleed in the brain, which causes brain cells to die.
3. The signs of a stroke are sudden:
  - Facial weakness or numbness
  - Arm or leg weakness or numbness - especially on one side of the body.
  - Speech problems or confusion,
  - Trouble seeing in one or both eyes.These signs may only last a few hours and are called a Transient Ischaemic Attack (TIA) or mini-stroke and must not be ignored.
4. A stroke is an emergency. If you see the signs of a stroke act FAST and call 999. [Urgent medical attention is needed.](#)
5. Early treatment saves lives and increases the chance of making a better recovery.
6. Stroke is the third biggest killer and the leading cause of severe disability in the UK.

7. Almost one in four men and one in five women aged 45 can expect to have a stroke if they live to 85.

8. More than three times as many women die from stroke than breast cancer in the UK.

9. Eating healthily, taking more exercise, not smoking and ensuring blood pressure is normal, can all help to prevent stroke.

10. A (TIA) or mini-stroke has identical symptoms to stroke, which last for less than 24 hours and are followed by a full recovery. A (TIA) or 'mini-stroke' is a powerful warning that an area of the brain is being deprived of blood, and a stroke may follow in the next few hours, days, weeks or months.

### **Act F.A.S.T.**

If you think someone may be having a stroke, act F.A.S.T. and do this simple test

<b><u>F</u>ACE</b>	Facial weakness – can the person smile? Has their mouth or eye drooped?
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<b><u>A</u>RMS</b>	Arm weakness – can the person raise both arms? Does one arm drift downward?
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<b><u>S</u>PEECH</b>	Speech problems – can the person speak clearly and understand what you say?
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<b><u>T</u>IME</b>	Time to call 999. Anyone seeing any of these signs should treat it as an emergency. Call 999 or get to the hospital fast. Brain cells are dying.
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