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Stroke hits women hardest

More women than men are dying of stroke every year, with the latest [Australian Institute of Health and Welfare data](#) revealing almost two-thirds of stroke victims were female.

In 2013, 6368 women were killed by stroke in comparison to 4181 men. Frighteningly, working age women are among those hardest hit, with stroke the fifth leading cause of death of women aged 45-64 years.

To help stem this tide of death and devastation, the National Stroke Foundation will join forces with stroke campaigners around the world on World Stroke Day October 29, as part of the global effort to raise awareness of stroke for women.

Globally women run a higher risk of stroke and are more likely than men to die as a result of this terrible disease.

The National Stroke Foundation is using World Stroke Day to highlight the desperate need for an accessible, affordable integrated health check program to detect women's risks of developing heart disease, stroke, chronic kidney disease or type 2 diabetes at general practitioners (GPs) nationally. A health check that would detect women - and men - at risk of stroke before a life-threatening emergency strikes.

National Stroke Foundation Chief Executive Officer and WSO board member responsible for the campaign Dr Erin Lalor said one in five women and one in six men globally will experience a stroke in their lifetime.

"Too many women are needlessly dying every year from stroke – a largely preventable disease. Mothers, sisters and friends' lives could be saved by knowledge of their stroke risk, making simple lifestyle changes or treating chronic conditions such as blood pressure," Dr Lalor said.

"Other than their longer life expectancy, research shows women have an increased burden of major stroke risk factors including high blood pressure, irregular heartbeat, diabetes, depression and obesity.

"An integrated health check is the best way to find out for women to understand their risk of having a stroke by taking into account all of these risk factors, instead of each one individually.

"The Federal Government must fund the implementation of a nationally consistent program. The sooner GPs routinely offer an integrated health check, the earlier they can act to prevent a life-threatening event," she said.

World Stroke Organization President Professor Stephen Davis echoed Dr Lalor's comments pointing out that women were at higher lifetime risk of stroke.

"Furthermore, specific risk factors and settings in women include pregnancy, the post-partum period and some hormonal replacement therapies. Some kinds of stroke, such as aneurysmal subarachnoid haemorrhage and cerebral venous thrombosis, are more common in women," Professor Davis said.



“For all these reasons, a greater awareness and focus on women and stroke is a global priority for the WSO.”

A stroke happens when the blood supply to part of a person’s brain is cut off. Without blood, brain cells can be damaged or die. This damage can have different effects, depending on where it happens in the brain. It can affect the body and mobility, speech as well as how a person thinks and feels. Stroke is the number two cause of death and a leading cause of disability globally.

Stroke also increases the risk of dementia. This is particularly relevant to women, given their greater lifetime stroke risk. The WSO is therefore publishing a global Proclamation on World Stroke Day, highlighting stroke and preventable dementia.

Led by Professor Vladimir Hachinski and endorsed by many leading global health bodies, this Proclamation emphasises the close link between stroke and dementia, and that dementia may be potentially preventable by stroke prevention strategies including lifestyle changes, identification and treatment of risk factors.

The World Stroke Organization and National Stroke Foundation are calling on women to be aware of their stroke risk and how best to manage it. Find out more about stroke and the global campaign at www.worldstrokecampaign.org

For more on the National Stroke Foundation visit www.strokefoundation.com.au

For more on the World Stroke Organization Campaign visit <http://www.worldstrokecampaign.org/get-involved/world-stroke-day-2015.html>

Media contact: Peta James e) media@strokefoundation.com.au ph) 0408 000 409
w) www.strokefoundation.com.au

Stroke and women snapshot

- 6368 women died of stroke in 2013
- 23,913 strokes occurred in women in 2013
- There are 192, 869 women stroke survivors living in the community
- One in five women are at risk of stroke:
 - 29 percent of women have high blood pressure
 - 58 percent of women are physically inactive
 - 94 percent of women do not eat enough fruit and vegetables
- Three out of four carers of stroke survivors are women