



# Mortality rates lower for stroke patients with post-care therapy

February 26, 2008



According to new research by the Canadian Stroke Network (CSN), nine out of 10 hospital deaths involving recovering stroke patients could be prevented if they were put in an organized follow-up program that involved care provided by health science professionals such as physiotherapists and occupational therapists.

The network, which includes more than 100 of Canada's leading scientists and clinicians from 24 universities, who work collaboratively on various aspects of stroke, presented the research last week at the International Stroke Conference in New Orleans, Louisiana.

The study looked at 3,631 patients admitted to 11 Canadian hospitals due to stroke between July 2003 and March 2005. The alarming statistics showed that the mortality rate for patients who received organized post-stroke care, such as physiotherapy and occupational therapy, was 2% at seven days, compared with 22.5% for those who didn't get organized post-stroke care.

At 30 days post-stroke, the mortality rate for patients who received organized care was 6.3%, compared to 28.1% for those who did not; at one year post-stroke, the mortality rate was 17.9% for those who received organized care, compared to 34.7% for those who did not.

"This is a stunning illustration of the impact of providing organized care to stroke patients," says study leader Dr. Gustavo Saposnik, who is based at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto.

"These research findings should be a call-to-action for all ministries of health and regional health authorities," says Elizabeth Woodbury, executive director of the Canadian Stroke Strategy.

Elisabeth Ballermann, the co-chair of the Canadian Health Professionals Secretariat (CHPS), says the new research suggests that as hospitals organize services to meet the needs of stroke patients, they need to give the same priority to physiotherapy and occupational therapy that they give to other medical procedures and pharmacological interventions.

-Hopefully this research will help hospitals understand that physiotherapy and occupational therapy is an essential part of a strong and responsive treatment plan for stroke patients," says Ballermann. -Too often, these professional services are seen as dispensable when funding is at issue. This study confirms that not only are they essential, but they save lives."

CHPS is a national advocacy body that represents more than 60,000 unionized health science professionals who deliver the diagnostic, clinical and rehabilitation services essential to timely and quality health care.

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