

# Stroke: The Third Leading Cause of Death

## Background:

- Stroke is a disease that affects the blood vessels that supply blood to the brain.  
(AHA, 2007)
- There are two main types of stroke. One is an ischemic stroke that is caused by blockage of a blood vessel; the other is a hemorrhagic stroke that is caused by bleeding. (AHA, 2007)
- The most common type is an ischemic stroke and accounts for approximately 88 percent of all strokes. (AHA, 2007)
- When a blood clot occludes an artery in the brain, it causes damage to the surrounding tissue. The extent of the damage varies and is dependent on how much of the brain did not receive circulation. (AHA, 2007)
- Stroke affects the opposite side of the body from which the stroke occurred in the brain.
- A clot can also form in another area of the body and travel to the brain and lodge there.
- Symptoms of stroke can include dizziness, sudden headache, weakness or numbness of the arm, leg or face on one side of the body, difficulty or inability to speak, difficulty swallowing and an inability to walk. This list is not inclusive of all symptoms that may appear.
- The diagnosis of a stroke should be done by a physician, they may ask the person suspected of a stroke to smile to look for uniformity (see if both sides are moving up appropriately), also they will have the person raise both arms, and ask them to

repeat a short simple sentence such as, “The sky is blue.” (American Stroke Foundation, 2007)

- There are other tests performed by physicians, such as a CT scan of the head to look for indication of a bleed or blockage.
- If you or someone you know may be having a stroke it is imperative that medical intervention be sought immediately.
- Risk factors for stroke that cannot be changed are age, heredity and race, gender, and the history of a prior stroke or TIA. (AHA, 2007)
- Risk factors that can be controlled, treated, or changed are high blood pressure, cigarette smoking, diabetes, carotid artery disease, atrial fibrillation, sickle cell disease, high cholesterol, poor diet, lack of exercise, and obesity. (AHA, 2007)

### **Statement of the Problem:**

- The goal stated in Healthy People 2010 is to increase the proportion of adults who are aware of the early warning signs and symptoms of stroke.
- Another goal from Healthy People 2010 is to increase the proportion of adults who are at a healthy weight, in turn decreasing the proportion of adults that are obese.
- Healthy People also states the goal of increasing the proportion of local health departments that have established culturally appropriate and linguistically competent community health promotion and disease prevention programs. (Healthy People, 2010)
- Self-intervention can also reduce the risk of stroke, by controlling those risk factors that you can.

## **Epidemiological Picture:**

- According to the American Heart Association, 150,147 people in the United States were killed by stroke, making stroke the third leading cause of death.
- Stroke is also a leading cause of serious, long-term disability in the United States. (AHA, 2007)
- Data show that about 700,000 people suffer a new or recurrent stroke each year, of which 500,000 of these are new and 200,00 are recurrent. (AHA, 2007)
- The 2004 death rates per 100,000 population for stroke were 48.1 for white males and 73.9 for black males, and 47.4 for white females and 64.9 for black females. (AHA, 2007)
- According to the AHA someone suffers a stroke every 45 seconds and someone dies from stroke every 3 minutes. (AHA, 2007)

## **Solutions:**

- American Heart Association ([www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org))

The American Heart Association “focuses on reducing disability and death from stroke through research, education, fund raising and advocacy.” (AHA, 2007) In addition, the American Heart Association founded the American Stroke Association. They spend more money on the efforts than any other agency except the federal government. (AHA, 2007) The American Heart Association spent 141.4 million dollars in 2002-2003. They have a Public Service Awareness Campaign in conjunction with the Ad Council. They develop educational tools for health care providers as well as the families that are providing care and/or prevention.

➤ Moving into Action ([www.cd.gov](http://www.cd.gov))

The Center for Disease Control has a “Moving into Action” program that promotes Heart-Healthy and Stroke-Free Communities. “Suggested actions are based on current national guidelines, scientific evidence, and existing efforts from states throughout the country.” (CDC, 2007) This moving into action program helps employers, policy makers and health care leaders assess what actions are most appropriate for their communities and can lend support to the efforts of individuals to prevent, manage, and control their risks for heart disease and stroke. (CDC, 2007)

➤ American Stroke Foundation ([www.americanstroke.org](http://www.americanstroke.org))

The American Stroke Foundation is a non-profit organization whose mission is; “To support survivors, their families, caregivers and friends by providing resources, services, education and information that improves their quality of life.” (ASF, 2007)

## **Bibliography**

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### **Stroke: Third Leading Cause of Death**

- There are 2 types of stroke an ischemic stroke where the blood flow to the brain is occluded and a hemorrhagic stroke where there is bleeding into the brain itself. (AHA, 2007)
- Symptoms of a stroke come on suddenly and may include dizziness, weakness or paralysis on one side of the body, difficulty speaking or swallowing, blindness or double vision, or inability to ambulate. This list is not inclusive of all symptoms that may present. (AHA, 2007)
- Stroke is the third leading cause of death in the United States and one of the leading causes of serious, long-term disability. (AHA, 2007)
- Many of the risk factors for stroke can be controlled, treated or changed. They include high blood pressure, cigarette smoking, carotid artery disease, atrial fibrillation, sickle cell disease, high blood cholesterol, poor diet, lack of exercise, and obesity.

- Risk factors that cannot be controlled include age, heredity and race, gender, and the history of prior stroke.
- The sooner a stroke is diagnosed, treatment with “clot busters” can begin to reduce the long term damage done by the stroke caused by a clot.
- Further information about stroke can be obtained through the American Heart Association, American Stroke Association, and CDC.