



Canadian Stroke Network

Réseau canadien contre
les accidents cérébrovasculaires

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Hospitals need equivalent of “Code Blue” for stroke patients, Canadian study shows

NEW ORLEANS, LA: Patients who have a stroke while in hospital are less likely to benefit from rapid access to acute stroke care than those who come into the emergency room with the same condition, according to a Canadian Stroke Network study presented today at the International Stroke Conference.

In fact, in-hospital stroke patients wait twice as long to get a brain scan (61 minutes vs. 30 minutes); they wait twice as long to get the clot-busting drug tPA, which can reverse stroke damage (138 minutes vs. 75 minutes); and, even adjusting for the fact that in-hospital patients are sicker, they have a higher mortality rate post-stroke (14.3% vs. 10.9%) than patients who come into hospital through the ER.

The study looked at data from the Registry of the Canadian Stroke Network on 12,506 patients admitted to 12 designated stroke centres in Ontario and Nova Scotia between July 2003 and March 2007 with an acute ischemic stroke. Of those, 535 had in-hospital strokes.

“You would think that if you were going to have a stroke, there’d be no better place to be than in the hospital,” says study leader Dr. Frank Silver of the Canadian Stroke Network. “But what we’ve found is that it takes longer to get you treated.”

“In the ER, there’s a well-oiled machine to triage stroke and a CT scanner nearby. But, on a hospital ward, personnel are less likely to expect a stroke,” Dr. Silver says. In-hospital stroke patients may be delayed while a CT scan is ordered and an orderly is called to transport them to radiology for assessment. In some hospitals, stroke patients are taken through the ER to speed up care.

“What this study shows is that unlike calling “Code Blue” for a patient with a cardiac arrest there’s no system on many hospital wards to call for help when a patient has a stroke,” Dr. Silver says. “We need to have an education program on non-neurology floors so that hospital personnel know how to recognize an acute stroke and who to call. In-hospital stroke is not that rare.”

About 50,000 Canadians have a stroke every year – one person every 10 minutes. Stroke is a leading cause of adult disability and death.

About the Canadian Stroke Network (www.canadianstrokenetwork.ca)

The Canadian Stroke Network includes more than 100 of Canada's leading scientists and clinicians from 24 universities who work collaboratively on various aspects of stroke. The Network, which is headquartered at the University of Ottawa, also includes partners from industry, the non-profit sector, provincial and federal governments. The Canadian Stroke Network, one of Canada's Networks of Centres of Excellence, is committed to reducing the physical, social and economic impact of stroke on the lives of individual Canadians and on society as a whole.

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