



Health & Fitness

Strokes are not always sudden events

Many people consider a stroke a sudden and devastating occurrence — a blood vessel rupture or blockage that prevents blood from flowing to the brain, killing brain cells and causing disability or death. In fact, not all strokes are "sudden." Early intervention can minimize damage, and preventive care may reduce the risk of stroke, according to the American Heart Association.

There are several major types of strokes. The most common types are caused by clots or other materials that block an artery supplying blood to a part of the brain. Ruptured blood vessels are responsible for another type of stroke. To date, great progress has been made in the treatment and prevention of conditions leading to a stroke.

"Several treatments are proving very successful in preventing stroke," said Dr. Stanley Briller, President of the AHA, Pennsylvania Affiliate. "There are two groups of new drugs that can successfully slow or prevent the formation of blood clots. Another treatment, this one surgical, can relieve severe blockage in the arteries of the neck. This can restore the blood supply to the brain."

"Stroke should be treated with the same sense of urgency as a heart attack," said Briller. "And, in order to receive immediate treatment, people must be able to recognize the warning signs of stroke."

The warning signs associated with a stroke are:

- sudden weakness or numbness of the face, arm or leg, localized on one side of the body,
- sudden dimness or loss of vision, particularly in one eye,
- loss of speech or trouble talking or understanding speech,
- sudden, severe headaches with no apparent cause,
- unexplained dizziness, unsteadiness or sudden falls, especially when combined with any of the previous symptoms.

"As stroke research evolves, we learn more about managing this disease — how to stabilize stroke patients and begin early therapy that can reduce the damage associated with stroke." Major progress is being made in both the prevention and treatment of stroke. The age-adjusted* death rate from stroke has declined, but, since people are living longer, the total number of strokes in America is increasing. That's why the American Heart Association advocates that individuals take action to reduce their risk of stroke. The estimated 500,000 people who suffer from a stroke each year in the United States generally have one or more of the following risk factors, which can be treated or alleviated:

1. high blood pressure,
2. heart disease,
3. transient ischemic attacks (TIAs) — temporary stroke-like symptoms which are strong predictors of stroke,
4. cigarette smoking, or
5. high red blood cell count.

Last year, the AHA assumed responsibility for working with some 850 stroke clubs and other support groups nationwide. These groups, known as the Stroke Connection, represent more than 45,000 stroke patients. During May, the AHA and the Stroke Connection will work together to educate Americans about the warning signs of stroke. The Stroke Connection is one example of groups which offer support, counseling and other services. Members often provide, through personal experience, the motivation many stroke survivors need as they begin recovery.

The AHA offers a variety of services and products related to stroke and stroke recovery including two newsletters, *Stroke Connection* and *Stroke of Luck*, educational materials for stroke patients and others affected by the condition and a national toll-free number specifically for answers to stroke-related questions. As the AHA keeps reaching out to stroke survivors and their families, they will continue to fund research and educational programs related to the prevention and treatment of this important and often devastating

disease. The American Heart Association is the nation's leading non-profit organization dedicated to reducing disability and death from cardiovascular diseases and stroke. Last year, the AHA

spent about \$232.5 million for heart and blood vessel research and for programs in public and professional education.

For more information on stroke prevention and treatment or information on local stroke

clubs, call your local AHA office or call 1-800-AHA-USA1.

* Age-adjusted death rates represent the elimination of changes in the data due to changes in population.



Associate Physicians is pleased to announce that Evelyn M. Shah, M.D. has joined them for the practice of Internal Medicine.

Dr. Shah is a graduate of the Far Eastern University in the Philippines and did her internship at the Velez Hospital and St. Vincent Hospital in Erie, PA. She did four years of residency in Internal Medicine and Pulmonary Medicine at Lutheran Hospital-Cleveland Metropolitan Hospital in Cleveland, Ohio and Bellevue Hospital and Veterans Administration Medical Center in New York.

Before coming to Associated Physicians, Dr. Shah was the Clinical Director for the Exeter Twp. Medical Center. She resides with her husband in Dallas.

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