U.S. Women Unfamiliar with Most Stroke Warning Signs

Many U.S. women don’t recognize the warning signs of a stroke, according to research presented at the American Heart Association’s Epidemiology and Prevention/Nutrition, Physical Activity and Metabolism 2014 Scientific Sessions. The first steps to getting help are being able to spot a stroke in yourself or others and knowing how to respond.

A study published in the American Heart Association journal, Stroke, finds that 1 in 5 U.S. women can’t identify a single warning sign — even though stroke is the fourth leading cause of death among Americans and the third among women, affecting roughly 55,000 more women than men each year.

The more commonly known symptoms of a drooping face, speech difficulty or weakness or numbness in one of the arms can be signs of stroke, says Heidi Mochari-Greenberger, an epidemiologist at Columbia University and the study’s lead author.

But those aren’t the only indicators. Lesser-known symptoms can include a sudden onset of dizziness, severe headache or vision loss.

When the American Heart Association and the American Stroke Association first began tracking women’s awareness of stroke in 1997, only 11 percent of women said they felt well-informed about what to watch for. That number today has grown higher but still not high enough, researchers say. Previous research has also suggested that men are as uninformed about signs and symptoms as women are, says Dr. Larry Goldstein, a neurologist and the director of the Duke Comprehensive Stroke Center.

In the study, 1,205 women were asked to name the signs of a stroke along with the first thing they’d do if they thought they were having one. While 84 percent of all women knew to call 911 if they thought they were having a stroke, just 51 percent recognized sudden weakness or numbness of the face or limb as indications of this sort of “brain attack.”

Less than half identified loss of speech as a sign, and even fewer recognized sudden severe headaches, unexplained dizziness or loss of vision as stroke symptoms.

Mochari-Greenberger says the signs of stroke vary from person to person, so it’s important to recognize not just one or two of the warning signs, but all of them. Treatment within about 4 1/2 hours of the first symptom is the most effective.

To speed response time, cardiologists have been pushing the F.A.S.T. campaign, the American Heart Association’s national campaign to increase stroke awareness and urge people to spot and respond quickly to signs of stroke:

• Face drooping.
• Arm weakness.
• Speech difficulty.
• Time to call 9-1-1.

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Meet Dr. Jon Taveau and Dr. Mark Fleming of SIH Brain and Spine Institute

Dr. Jon Taveau is a board certified neurosurgeon. He earned his medical degree from Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine in Philadelphia, PA. Dr. Taveau specializes in complex cranial, spinal, and peripheral nerve surgery using minimally invasive techniques. In addition to his medical degrees, he holds a Master of Science in biomedical sciences.

Dr. Mark Fleming earned his medical degree from Tulane University in New Orleans, L.A. He is board certified in neurosurgery and is a member of the Fellowship of the American Association of Neurological Surgeons. He specializes in peripheral nerve surgery, spine and brain tumors, computer guided spine surgery and adult and pediatric neurosurgical care.

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Stroke Warning Signs

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“It’s so important to recognize a stroke and get quick treatment,” said Dr. Lori Mosca, a professor of medicine, director of Preventive Cardiology at New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Columbia University Medical Center in New York and principal investigator of the study. “Public awareness campaigns such as F.A.S.T., along with education from health care providers, can help raise that awareness.”

“The simplicity of that campaign makes it useful,” says Goldstein, “but it leaves out some other symptoms that can indicate a stroke, such as visual loss or a sudden severe headache. There’s this yin and yang in creating a campaign that’s easy to understand but also comprehensive.”

The most important thing to remember and watch for, he says, is “if there is an abrupt change neurologically — any abrupt change. That could be a stroke and that needs to be taken seriously.”

Delay of ICD-10 Compliance Date

On April 1, 2014, the Protecting Access to Medicare Act of 2014 was signed into law. The bill included delaying the implementation of ICD-10 diagnosis and inpatient procedure codes for at least one year.

HealthLink is committed to meeting the requirements of all mandates, including the implementation of the ICD-10 code set. We are currently assessing the impact of this change on activities like process changes and testing timelines and expect to have an updated implementation plan in the near future.

HealthLink will continue to work to help ensure that our systems, supporting business processes, policies and procedures successfully meet the implementation standards and deadlines without interruption to day-to-day business practices. We will be capable of accepting and processing ICD-10 diagnosis and inpatient procedure codes on October 1, 2015.*

* The October 1, 2015 compliance date is expected to be confirmed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in an interim rule that will be released in the near future.
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- Supply your **HealthLink Vendor ID**.
- Review all terms and authorization forms prior to submitting them to Emdeon.

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Coming soon, ProviderInfoSource will be enhanced with time-saving alternatives to paper remittance advices. Providers will be able to visit [https://ProviderInfoSource.healthlink.com](https://ProviderInfoSource.healthlink.com) to check out the new PAYMENT STATUS tab. As you can see below, the site will be enhanced to better assist with your day-to-day business with HealthLink allowing you and your staff to access HealthLink State of Illinois Remittance Advices.

1. **Enter Check Number**
2. **Click “Submit”**
3. **View the Results**
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If you have a coding issue you would like to see addressed in this column, please contact your HealthLink Network Consultant.

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