



NEWS RELEASE

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Speak Up: What you should know about stroke

The Joint Commission campaign provides advice about the early signs and risks of stroke

(OAKBROOK TERRACE, Ill. – February 1, 2012) Knowing the early signs and risk factors for stroke and understanding that a stroke is a “brain attack” requiring immediate action can significantly improve a patient’s recovery and prevent future strokes, according to The Joint Commission’s new **Speak Up™: “What You Should Know About Stroke”** educational campaign. The Joint Commission is launching this campaign, which coincides with the International Stroke Conference 2012 (February 1-3), to help Americans understand the importance of preventing strokes and seeking immediate treatment when they occur. The campaign was developed in collaboration with the American Academy of Neurology, American Association of Neuroscience Nurses, American Heart Association/American Stroke Association, National Stroke Association and NIH/National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke.

The Joint Commission’s new campaign covers topics such as the early signs of stroke, stroke risk factors, what to do if you are at increased risk for stroke, what happens after a stroke, and what to expect during recovery. The campaign provides helpful tips and encourages people to take action to improve their health.

“A stroke can be a devastating event, but there are many things we can do to reduce our risks,” says Ana Pujols-McKee, M.D., executive vice president and chief medical officer, The Joint Commission. “By learning about stroke, you can protect yourself and your loved ones from one of the leading causes of death in America.”

The Joint Commission’s new stroke education campaign is part of the award-winning Speak Up program. Speak Up brochures are available in English and Spanish at www.jointcommission.org. The Joint Commission’s Speak Up program urges people to take an active role in their own health care.

The basic framework of the Speak Up campaign urges patients to:

Speak up if you have questions or concerns, and if you don't understand, ask again. It's your body and you have a right to know.

Pay attention to the care you are receiving. Make sure you're getting the right treatments and medications by the right health care professionals. Don't assume anything.

Educate yourself about your diagnosis, the medical tests you are undergoing, and your treatment plan.

Ask a trusted family member or friend to be your advocate.

Know what medications you take and why you take them. Medication errors are the most common health care errors.

Use a hospital, clinic, surgery center, or other type of health care organization that has undergone a rigorous on-site evaluation against established state-of-the-art quality and safety standards, such as that provided by The Joint Commission.

Participate in all decisions about your treatment. You are the center of the health care team.

Speak Up brochures also are available on the topics of breastfeeding, dialysis patients who are hospitalized, diabetes patients who are hospitalized, visiting the doctor's office, understanding medical tests, recovering after leaving the hospital, preventing medication mistakes, preventing infections, health literacy, preparing to become a living organ donor, avoiding mistakes in your surgery, and preventing errors in care. The brochures can be found at <http://www.jointcommission.org/speakup.aspx>. To sign up to receive future issues of Speak Up™, please go to http://www.jointcommission.org/thickbox/NewsletterSignUp.aspx?KeepThis=true&TB_iframe=true&height=480&width=640 to join the Speak Up™ E-alerts list.

Statements of support for the *Speak Up*™: “What You Should Know About Stroke campaign

“Hours or even minutes can mean the difference between life and death or significant disability when it comes to having a stroke. That is why the American Academy of Neurology is pleased to be involved in The Joint Commission’s new Speak Up campaign to help people recognize the signs of stroke. With stroke, every minute counts, so it’s important people pay attention to any symptoms and call 911 to get to an emergency department as soon as possible.”

Bruce Sigsbee, M.D., FAAN, president, American Academy of Neurology

“Time is the most powerful tool in battling a stroke. Early recognition of the signs and symptoms of stroke is key to giving a potential stroke patient the best treatment options. Time to ask the appropriate questions is also a vital component to a stroke patient’s recovery. That’s why the American Association of Neuroscience Nurses is pleased to collaborate with The Joint Commission’s Speak Up for Stroke campaign to increase awareness of stroke and empower patients and caregivers with the questions to improve their care and outcomes.”

Kathy Helmick, M.S., CNRN, CRNP, president, American Association of Neuroscience Nurses

“The American Heart Association/American Stroke Association continues to be a leader in the charge to reduce stroke deaths nationally and build public awareness of the stroke warning signs. From expanding primary stroke centers nationwide to releasing the latest stroke treatment recommendations, AHA/ASA has been dedicated to stroke care and issues for decades. While we have made great gains in helping to reduce stroke from the #3 killer to the #4 killer in the United States, there are still too many people disabled by stroke. There is a pressing need to improve acute stroke care and public awareness of stroke warning signs. The AHA/ASA has partnered with The Joint Commission in its goal to educate the public about stroke and to help improve stroke care in hospitals nationwide.”

Ralph L. Sacco, M.D., M.S., FAHA, FAAN, immediate past president, American Heart Association/American Stroke Association

“Supporting those at risk for stroke and those already impacted by stroke are important elements of the National Stroke Association’s mission. Stroke is far too common and few people are properly informed about how to recognize warning signs or know about available treatment. Moreover, stroke survivors face unbelievable challenges trying to navigate through recovery.

We are very pleased to be collaborating on The Joint Commission’s new Speak Up campaign that will educate people about what they should know about stroke because it tackles these very issues. The National Stroke Association is committed to raising stroke awareness and this is one more excellent way to reach patients that are part of The Joint Commission’s invaluable network.”

Jim Baranski, CEO, National Stroke Association

“Building on the research that led to the first treatment for acute stroke, the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke recognizes that public education about the early signs and risks of stroke can be a rallying point for everyone involved in stroke research, treatment and care. The Joint Commission’s campaign is sure to enhance the goals we are all striving for – to motivate people to take an action that could spare them from lifelong disability and to reduce the tremendous medical and economic burden of stroke.”

Marian Emr, communications director, NIH National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke

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Founded in 1951, The Joint Commission seeks to continuously improve health care for the public, in collaboration with other stakeholders, by evaluating health care organizations and inspiring them to excel in providing safe and effective care of the highest quality and value. The Joint Commission evaluates and accredits more than 19,000 health care organizations and programs in the United States, including more than 10,300 hospitals and home care organizations, and more than 6,500 other health care organizations that provide long term care, behavioral health care, laboratory and ambulatory care services. The Joint Commission also provides certification of more than 2,000 disease-specific care programs, primary stroke centers, and health care staffing services. An independent, not-for-profit organization, The Joint Commission is the nation's oldest and largest standards-setting and accrediting body in health care. Learn more about The Joint Commission at www.jointcommission.org.