Empowering Women’s Health: Learn About Women & Stroke

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Did you know……

• That stroke kills twice as many women as breast cancer EVERY YEAR?

However…..

• In a recent survey, women believed breast cancer was five times more prevalent than stroke

And…

• 40% of women said they were only somewhat or not at all concerned about having a stroke!
More facts…….

- Approx 800,000 new or recurrent strokes every year
  - More than half (53.5%) are women!

- Stroke is the 5th leading cause of overall death
  - 5th for men
  - 3rd for women!

- By 2030, there will be an estimated 72 million people >65 years old (19% of the population), and women will increasingly outnumber men.

- Some of this can be explained by the fact that women live longer
  - Therefore, we have a higher lifetime risk of stroke

- Some studies suggest that women have longer prehospital delays, which may limit our options for acute care treatments
Other unique characteristics about women & stroke……

- Stroke is the leading cause of adult disability!! (both men and women)
- More than half of all family caregivers in the US are women.
- What happens to the family when they become disabled???

- Because women tend to be older when they have their stroke, they more likely to be living alone & widowed.
- Where is there support?
A new awakening……

- Early recognition!
  - How to spot a stroke!
  - Are women different?
  - How to respond FAST!

- Prevention!
  - Know your risk factors
  - Including those unique to women

- More research
  - Unique characteristics of women
What is a stroke?

An interruption of blood flow to the brain which leads to brain injury.

Ischemic = “blockage”: 85%  
Hemorrhagic = “bleeding”: 15%
What is a “mini-stroke?”

- aka “Transient ischemic attack” (TIA)
- Warning sign of a future stroke – up to 40% of TIA patients will have a future stroke
- **Symptoms of TIAs are the same as stroke**
- TIA symptoms can resolve within minutes or hours
- It is important to seek immediate medical attention if you suspect that you are having or have had a TIA
How to spot a stroke?

- **F = FACE:** Ask the person to smile.
- **A = ARM:** Ask the person to raise both arms.
- **S = SPEECH:** Ask the person to speak a simple sentence.
- **T = TIME:** If you observe any of these signs, CALL 9-1-1 IMMEDIATELY!!!
Do women have “different” stroke symptoms than men?

- Poorly understood….need more research
- Some studies suggest women may report unique stroke symptoms:
  - sudden face and limb pain
  - sudden hiccups
  - sudden nausea
  - sudden general weakness
  - sudden chest pain
  - sudden shortness of breath
  - sudden palpitations
- These symptoms, especially in the context of other classic stroke symptoms, should not be ignored!
Prevention & Risk Factors

- Risk factors increase the likelihood of stroke
- Women possess similar risk factors as men, some which are stronger in women & others unique to women alone!

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High blood pressure

- Most common modifiable risk factor!
- Good control has the greatest impact on reducing stroke risk!
- Control means:
  - Get measured!!! See where you are
  - Go to your doctor
  - Take medications as prescribed
  - Reducing weight, exercise
  - Low salt
High Blood Pressure

- What are differences in women?
  - Women may be more likely to have high blood pressure than men
  - Often comes after menopause
  - In high risk female populations (ie. Hispanic & African American), start earlier

- 38% reduction in women’s stroke risk if treated
Pregnancy is a stroke risk!!

While not common...more likely 3\textsuperscript{rd} trimester and first 6 weeks after delivery due to physical changes in the body.

Pregnancy related high blood pressure and associated complications (ie. Ecclampsia) is the leading cause for increased stroke risk!

- Obesity
- Over 40 years old
- History of high blood pressure, diabetes, vascular or kidney disease
- Family history of pregnancy related high blood pressure

\textbf{Stroke risk persists well after childbirth, with an increase in chronic hypertension (increasing lifetime risk of stroke)}
Important considerations in pregnancy

- Studies suggest many primary care providers are not aware of association between pregnancy complications & long term risk of stroke
  - Still needs more research!
- Prevention of these disorders in pregnancy is important
  - Talk with your doctor re: aspirin therapy to reduce stroke risk if you have high blood pressure during pregnancy
  - Calcium supplementation may help reduce risk of developing complications of pregnancy assoc. with high blood pressure
  - If you have high blood pressure, prompt treatment
  - Ensure selected medications safe for mom & fetus
  - Needs continued monitoring after pregnancy & beyond!!!
Oral Contraceptive Use

- Risk is generally low but certain populations need to be aware
- **When does the birth control pill increase risk??**
  - Older women (ex. 45-49 years old)
  - Combined with smoking
  - Components of metabolic syndrome: high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, obesity
  - Those with prior history of blood clots

**What should you do?**
- Know your risk factors!
- Screen blood pressure before starting and monitor
- Stop smoking
- Consider alternative methods if your risk is high
Postmenopause Hormonal Use

• Early use of hormonal therapy thought to reduce stroke risk
• Instead, may increase the risk!
• Some evidence suggests that early menopause may pose a higher risk of stroke (natural or surgical)- need more research

Recommendations:
• Never used for prevention of stroke!
• Use of hormonal therapy for other indications must be balanced with personal risk factors
• Risk factors are cumulative!
Atrial Fibrillation

- Irregular Heart Rhythm, often fast
- Can cause clots in the heart that can be dislodged and travel to the brain to cause an embolic stroke.
- Follow Doctor’s orders:
  - Take medications as ordered for heart rate control
  - Take blood thinner medications as directed
Atrial fib

- Increases stroke risk 4-5 times [click here]
- ~ 60% of people with a-fib over 75 years old are women
- Prevalence increases with age and women live longer.....
- Ask to be screened!!!!!!
  - Pulse rate & ECG check

GOT AFIB?
YOU'RE NOT ALONE...

Atrial fibrillation, or Afib, is the most common type of arrhythmia and affects millions of Americans.

2010
2.7 million people in the U.S. living with Afib

2030
9.4 million people in the U.S. living with Afib

**WHAT CAUSES AFIB?**
- Diabetes
- Heart Failure
- High Blood Pressure
- Heart Disease
- Hyperthyroidism

**AFIB COMPLICATIONS TO AVOID**
Heart failure can cause Afib, and Afib can worsen heart failure. Both conditions increase the likelihood of the other.

**STEPS TO REDUCE YOUR RISK OF AFIB COMPLICATIONS**

1. **EAT A HEART-HEALTHY DIET** of whole foods such as vegetables, fruits, whole grains, lean meats, etc.
2. **FOLLOW AN AFIB-FRIENDLY EXERCISE ROUTINE** for better cardiovascular health.
3. **MAINTAIN A HEALTHY WEIGHT** to reduce potential cardiovascular complications, including diabetes, stroke, and heart attack.
4. **TAKE YOUR PRESCRIBED MEDICATIONS** to control your heart's rhythm and rate and prevent stroke.

REFERENCES:
Diabetes/ Metabolic Syndrome/ Obesity

- Metabolic syndrome: Combination of risk factors for heart disease and stroke that tend to occur together
  - Insulin resistance (ie. type II diabetes)
  - Increased waist circumference (larger than 35 in)
  - High triglycerides (higher than 130 mg/L)
  - High blood pressure
- Women with metabolic syndrome: increases risk by 30% (compared to men, only 4%)

Healthy lifestyle changes are more important than ever in women!
Lifestyle changes

Regular exercise

Limit alcohol to 1 drink/ day

Quit smoking

Diet high in fruits, vegetables, grains, nuts, olive oil and low saturated fat
DASH: Lifestyle Eating

- Grains (preferably whole) (7-8 per day)
  - What's a Serving: 1 cup cereal, 1 cup rice, 1 cup cooked pasta, or 1/2 cup cooked beans

- Low-Fat Dairy (2-3 per day)
  - What's a Serving: 1 slice bread, 1/2 cup dry cereal, 1/2 cup cooked rice, pasta, or cereal

- Seafood, Poultry, Lean Meat (0-2 per day)
  - What's a Serving: 3 oz. broiled or roasted seafood, skinless poultry, or lean meat

- Oils, Salad Dressing, Mayo (2-3 per day)
  - What's a Serving: 1 tsp. oil or soft margarine, 1 tsp. regular mayonnaise, 1 Tbsp. low-fat mayonnaise, 1 Tbsp. regular salad dressing, 2 Tbsp. light salad dressing

- Sweets (5 per week)
  - What's a Serving: 1/2 cup cooked beans, 1/2 cup nuts, 2 Tbsp. sunflower seeds

- What's a Serving:
  - Low-fat fruit yogurt
  - 1/2 cup low-fat frozen yogurt
  - 1 Tbsp. maple syrup, sugar, or jam

- Note: Choose lower-salt foods from all categories.
Migraine with Aura

- Women 4x more likely to have migraines
- Most are not associated with stroke
- **So what factors increase the risk?**
  - Migraine with aura doubles the risk, esp. <55 y.o.
  - The more migraines, the higher the risk
  - Combined with smoking
  - Combined with oral contraceptive use

**The good news……..**

- More likely to be a TIA or non-disabling stroke and it appears that aspirin works well in this population to prevent future events.
- Can further reduce your risk by modifying lifestyle
Summary

• Women need to be empowered to take action to reduce their risk of stroke!
• Women also need to be able to recognize a stroke and act FAST……to increase their chances for acute therapy & reduce the disabling effect of stroke.
• TIA’s—40% of patients will have a future stroke
• High Blood Pressure—if treated, 38% reduction in women stroke risk
• Pregnancy: watch blood pressure even after child birth
• Hormones: contraceptive and/or post menopausal—discuss risk benefits with doctor
• Metabolic Syndrome-increases stroke risk by 30% vs men 4%
Comprehensive Stroke Center

- Certified by DNV Healthcare
- Cares for ALL types of stroke patients
- 24/7 access to endovascular procedures
- 24/7 on site neurosurgical availability
- Three levels of specialized neuroscience nursing care
  - Neuro ICU
  - Neuro Step-down
  - Neuro floor
- Multidisciplinary approach to stroke care across the continuum of the disease process
- Catheter based therapy for patients beyond the tPA window.
- Only 5 Comprehensive Stroke Centers in NYS
CNY Stroke Support Group

- Will be held the third Monday of the month beginning in May, from 5pm - 7pm, at Healthlinks: All are welcome
- May 18th
- June 15th
- July 20th
- August 17th
- September 21st
Thank you!

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