

The Miami Times

Tempora Mutantur Et Nos Mutamur In Illis

NUMBER 34

MIAMI, FLORIDA, APRIL 20-26, 2011

50 CENTS

Health & Wellness

STROKES:

When every minute until treatment counts

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If one of your loved ones was doubled over with chest pain, having what appeared to be a heart attack, or witnessed someone sustain severe injuries, you would probably call 911 so they could receive medical attention as quickly as possible. What if you observed someone suddenly lose the ability to speak, move parts of his or her body or have trouble seeing? Would you react the same way? The answer is probably yes, if you recognize the symptoms of a stroke.

Knowing what symptoms to look for and reacting quickly may save a stroke victim's life and may increase their chances for a successful recovery. Every minute counts when someone is having a stroke, yet the average stroke patient waits

an emergency room and many wait much longer, sometimes an entire day.

Strokes occur when blood flow to the brain is interrupted. When a person begins suffering a stroke, brain cells in the immediate area begin to die because they stop receiving the oxygen and nutrients they need to function. This is why immediate medical attention is necessary.

Stroke patients who receive treatment within the first hour of onset have the best chance of survival and prevention of disability. The window of opportunity to treat the majority of stroke patients is between three and four hours. After six hours, studies show that there may be little to no benefit.

stroke. The most common is called an ischemic stroke, which are caused by a blood clot that blocks or plugs a blood vessel or artery in the brain. These types of strokes may be treated with a drug called t-PA, which dissolves blood clots, if patients receive care within the first three and four hours of the stroke. The second major type of stroke is a hemorrhagic stroke, which is caused by a blood vessel in the brain breaking and bleeding



FISCHER

into the brain. Hemorrhagic strokes cannot be treated with t-PA. Instead, surgery is often performed to help relieve the pressure or blood clots caused by this type of stroke. In both cases, time is of the essence for successful treatment.

attack that may be a sign that an ischemic stroke is on the way. Transient ischemic attacks, or "mini-strokes," happen when blood flow to the brain is temporarily blocked. Sufferers may experience blurry or lost vision on both eyes; tingling or numbness of the mouth, or are unable to speak clearly. The effects of TIAs may last only a few minutes or even an entire to a day, but this does not mean they should be ignored. TIAs may be predictors of strokes. It's estimated that about 15 percent of TIA sufferers will have a stroke within a year of the TIA experience.

Besides TIAs, there are other warning signs of a stroke. They include:

- Sudden numbness or weakness of face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body.

Stroke warning signs

STROKES

continued from 17B

- Sudden confusion or trouble speaking or understanding speech.
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, or loss of balance or coordination.
- Sudden severe headache with no known cause.
- Blurred or double vision, drowsiness, and nausea or vomiting.

Remember, not every stroke sufferer will have all of these signs and sometimes the symptoms will go away only to return again. Call 911 right away if you or any one you know have one or more of these symptoms. The sooner medical

treatment is given, the better the chances for survival and healing.

North Shore Medical Center's Certified Advanced Primary Stroke Care Center combines the resources of many medical specialties to quickly evaluate and treat patients with complex medical needs.

The stroke team includes Emergency Department physicians, Neurologists, Neurosurgeons, Interventional Radiologists and Radiologists who specialize in the care of strokes. The team is available round-the-clock to respond when a patient with stroke symptoms comes to the hospital. For more information on North Shore's Certified Advanced Primary Stroke Center please call 305-835-6000.