A Year of Progress: Together to End Stroke

The American Heart Association/American Stroke Association has made important progress in the inaugural year of the Together to End Stroke initiative dedicated to educating Americans that stroke is preventable, treatable and beatable, and engaging them in an emotional and meaningful way to support action.

Since its launch last March, Together to End Stroke has laid a strong foundation providing the tools and resources necessary for measurable impact towards the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association’s goal to improve the cardiovascular health of all Americans by 20 percent and reduce death from stroke by 20 percent by 2020. Thanks to the dedicated network of staff, volunteers, strategic alliances and our national-sponsor, Coviden, the Together to End Stroke initiative has made tremendous progress toward this goal.

“We need to understand more than just the numbers of Americans that we reach,” said Kara Stephens, marketing manager, American Heart Association/American Stroke Association. “We’re establishing national strategies and accountability measures to understand the overall impact our initiative and campaigns make in improving brain health and post-stroke recovery in the U.S.”

Throughout the continuation of these strategies and resources, Together to End Stroke expects to positively affect the lives of millions of Americans by reducing the impact of stroke.

An Early Success Story

The impact of the Together to End Stroke initiative is measured around the stories we hear and see every day showcasing how the initiative has positively impacted lives.

“Our results should be measured in terms of lives saved and improved over the years of our commitment, not just in terms of effort or dollars contributed,” said Kathy Rogers, executive vice president of the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association, Consumer Health and Markets.

A prime example of this success occurred due to an interview broadcast on KCTV the day after World Stroke Day, Oct. 28, 2013. During the interview, Teri Ackerson described the onset of her stroke symptoms that occurred the morning of Memorial Day 2013. Later that day, she and her son, Parker, were driving home when her son recognized she was having a stroke.

Due to Teri’s stroke experience, she has re-dedicated her life to teaching people about the most common warning signs of stroke, F.A.S.T. (Face Drooping. Arm Weakness. Speech Difficulty. Time to Call 9-1-1). Her partnership with the Together to End Stroke initiative and her local American Heart Association/American Stroke Association office as well as her dedication to conveying the importance of learning F.A.S.T. through channels such as local media resulted in another life saved in Kansas City.

A few days after watching Teri’s segment, a local woman identified herself as having similar symptoms to what Teri had described. She decided to immediately call 9-1-1, allowing her local hospital to treat the stroke and enabling doctors to quickly identify she was having a stroke and to administer life-saving care. As a result of watching Teri’s story and hearing Together to End Stroke’s F.A.S.T. messaging, this individual has made a full recovery.

Through national sponsorship, partnership, and local activation coming together, the Together to End Stroke initiative has been educating Americans that stroke is preventable, treatable and beatable toward the greater goal to decrease the burden of stroke.

The progress we have made in the initiative’s first year holds even greater promise for the upcoming years. For more information on how to support this initiative, visit the Together to End Stroke website, strokeassociation.org/togetherendstroke.

By Kara Stephens, MPH, MSA, PMP, CHES

Cathy Silva, MD, FAHA; and Osama Zaghloul, MD, CAPA, FAHA, present Edward Jauch (center), MD, FAHA, with the 2013 Stroke Council Award.

Welcome to Connections. This issue comes to you following the Scientific Stroke Conference 2014 held in San Diego. I first want to thank the International Stroke Conference Program Committee, and specifically Steve Greenberg, MD, PhD, FAHA, for all of the effort required to make ISC 2014 such a success. Second, I hope that all of you who attended had a productive and enjoyable meeting. Please provide feedback to Greenberg and the Program Committee on how we can continue to improve the educational experience.

Numerous studies concluded in 2013, and data from many pivotal trials from around the world were presented at the ISC. The hard work of the global stroke community continues to produce advances in our understanding of stroke and ways to prevent, treat and rehabilitate strokes. Collectively, these advances are making significant contributions to the AHA/ASA 2020 goals to improve the cardiovascular health of all Americans by 20 percent, while reducing deaths from cardiovascular disease and stroke by 20 percent.

Almost 3,800 stroke professionals attended ISC 2014, and there were more than 1,500 scientific presentations, with a mixture of invited symposia and abstract presentations. In addition, the Tuesday before the official opening of the ISC was packed with great educational experiences for different audiences: State-of-the-Science Stroke Nursing Symposium, Pre-conference Symposium 1: Stroke in the Real World: Emergency Stroke Care 2014, and a new Pre-conference Symposium II (Student, Trainee and Early Career) Animal Models 2.0: Co-Morbid Conditions, Optogenetics and Other New Directions.

The ISC meeting itself featured discussions of great breadth, depth and controversy, ranging from use of nanotechnology for acute treatment and imaging, brain stimulation paradigms for brain recovery, the relationship of vascular disease and cognition, interpretation of the latest treatment trials of intracerebral hemorrhage, the movement of acute stroke treatment and trials to the setting of the ambulance at the site of the stroke, management of aneurysm and arteriovenous malformations, Phase III multicenter animal trials of stroke therapies, as well as late-breaking results of clinical trials and research findings. The ISC continues to be a must-attend event for those clinicians and scientists who want to hear the latest science and the great ongoing debates within the field of stroke and cerebrovascular disease.

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