

LESSONS LEARNED: STROKE SURVIVOR & CAREGIVER STUDY

STUDY GOALS

In this study, we wanted to understand the challenges that stroke survivors and their caregivers in North Carolina face when seeking emergency help. To do this, we interviewed 42 North Carolinians about their experiences with acute stroke.

We carefully wrote down and analyzed these interviews to find common themes and reasons for seeking medical help. We were especially interested in understanding what stroke survivors and caregivers thought/felt about calling 9-1-1 for their stroke.

STUDY RESULTS

Of the stroke experiences discussed in our interviews, participants sought medical help right away roughly two-thirds of the time. In about one-third of the strokes, participants had a delay of more than six hours.

Family, friends, or neighbors were helpful in recognizing the signs/symptoms of stroke and were often the first to contact medical professionals. If the survivor was alone when symptoms started, he/she was more likely to wait to seek care.

WHAT HELPED PARTICIPANTS?

- Spotting stroke-like symptoms, such as one-sided facial or limb weakness, speech difficulties, or confusion
- Having a family member, friend, or neighbor who works in healthcare and who participants could ask about symptoms

WHAT MADE SEEKING CARE DIFFICULT?

- Not being sure what was happening, especially when symptoms didn't seem like a stroke or didn't feel serious
- Hesitating to get medical help because of discomfort with healthcare providers or going to the hospital
- Being alone when symptoms first started
- Concerns about the costs of healthcare



IMPORTANT STUDY TAKEAWAYS

1. Know the BE-FAST signs/symptoms

- Sudden loss of **B**alance
- Sudden vision changes in one or both **E**yes
- Drooping on one side of **F**ace
- Weakness or numbness in one **A**rm
- Difficulty speaking or slurred **S**peech
- Terrible headache

Signs/symptoms may vary. The person experiencing the symptoms may not be aware.

2. Call 9-1-1

Stroke is an emergency. Even if you or a loved one lives near a hospital, it's best to call 9-1-1.

3. When in doubt, get checked out

If you're feeling symptoms that are unusual or something you think might be related to a stroke, it's best to get checked out by a medical professional. Stroke can happen at any age, for any race or gender.

A big thanks to everyone who participated in our study!

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