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Could you recognise a stroke?

Understanding Stroke Day at the RUH, Wednesday 11th February

The Stroke Team at the RUH have ambitious plans – to help all 4,800 staff recognise the first signs of a stroke.

From receptionists to porters, cleaners to consultants, all staff are being taught to get help immediately if they think someone has had a stroke. And now, in the week the Department of Health announces a £12 million campaign to raise awareness of the symptoms of stroke, the RUH is holding an event for visitors to the hospital so they too can help their friends and family by recognising the symptoms of a stroke, FAST.

Stroke, the loss of brain function due to a blood clot or bleed in the brain, is the third leading cause of death in the UK and the single largest cause of adult disability in England. Stroke can happen to anyone, young or old, at any time. In fact, 25 per cent of people who have a stroke are under retirement age.

Early intervention is vital to reduce the disabling effects of a stroke so the RUH is promoting the FAST Campaign, endorsed by the Stroke Association, and now the Department of Health.

The campaign teaches staff to remember FAST – Face Arm Speech Time to call 999 – to help them recognise the symptoms of stroke and understand that prompt emergency treatment can reduce the risk of death and disability.

Consultant Nurse Claire Fullbrook Scanlon says “We want every member of staff at the RUH to be able to recognise the signs of a stroke so we’ve sent out FAST information on every payslip, held a number of 45 minute training sessions and we’re now asking the whole hospital to get involved in our Understanding Stroke Day.”

The Understanding Stroke Day will be held at the RUH on Wednesday 11th February. The Stroke Team will be asking staff, patients and visitors to remember FAST.

Facial weakness	Can the person smile? Has their mouth or eye drooped?
Arm weakness	Can the person raise both arms?
Speech problems	Can the person speak clearly and understand what you say?
Time to call	By calling 999 early treatment can be given which can prevent further brain damage.

Consultant Stroke Physician Dr Louise Shaw says “It is vital that we teach as many people as possible to recognise the symptoms of stroke. Stroke is a medical emergency and by calling 999 and getting emergency help there is a chance that the disabling effects of a stroke can be dramatically reduced.”

ENDS

Interview/filming/photo opportunities are available with

- Louise Shaw, Consultant Stroke Physician
- Claire Fullbrook Scanlon, Consultant Nurse
- Denise Pocock, member of secretarial staff who has taken part in FAST training on both Monday 9th February am (launch of DoH campaign) or Wednesday lunchtime during the Understanding Stroke Day. We also hope to have a patient who has received the ground breaking treatment, thrombolysis, after suffering from a stroke on both the Monday and Wednesday.

Please contact Rachel on 01225 826230 to arrange filming/interviews/photographs.

Representatives from the Stroke Association and Different Strokes will also be attending the Understanding Stroke Day on Wednesday.

Notes for Editors

Stroke is currently the third leading cause of death in the UK and the single largest cause of adult disability in England. An estimated 150,000 people have a stroke in the UK each year. There are over 67,000 deaths due to stroke each year in the UK

Stroke has a greater disability impact than any other chronic disease. Over 300,000 people are living with moderate to severe disabilities as a result of stroke

Over a 1000 people a year in the RUH area (BANES, Wiltshire and Somerset) suffer a stroke or mini stroke.

The failure to recognise stroke symptoms as a medical emergency can mean that urgent medical treatment for stroke is delayed.

A MORI poll commissioned by the Stroke Association in 2005 suggested that only half of people asked can correctly identify what a stroke is, with only 40 per cent correctly naming three stroke symptoms, and a quarter did not believe that any specialised treatment or care could make a difference. 60 per cent would contact their GP or NHS Direct, and only a third of respondents would call an ambulance or go to hospital.

For more information, see www.stroke.org.uk