

22 October 2012**Communications Department**

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Media Release**Champions in the fight against stroke**

Stroke - a condition that attacks 15 million people worldwide every year and claims a life every six seconds – can be beaten.

Staff at the Royal United Hospital, are working with the Stroke Association, ahead of World Stroke Day on 29 October, to increase awareness of stroke and the actions that can be taken to combat it.

Every Monday they host a drop-in session in the Acute Stroke Unit for patients and relatives, to ask questions and pick up information about stroke.

Claire Fullbrook-Scanlon, Consultant Nurse in Stroke at the RUH, says: “Stroke is largely preventable and treatable.

“By sharing essential life-saving information and sharing knowledge about actions and lifestyle behaviours with the public, we can decrease the risks of having a stroke.

“People need to know the risk factors; high blood pressure, irregular pulse, diabetes, and high cholesterol. You need to be physically active and exercise regularly. Maintain a healthy diet high in fruit and vegetable and low in salt, limit alcohol consumption, avoid cigarette smoke and learn to recognise the warning signs of a stroke and how to take action.

“You should familiarise yourself with the FAST test, a simple assessment which anyone can carry out to recognise if somebody is having a stroke.”

FAST stands for Facial weakness, Arm weakness, Speech problems, Time to call 999 and encourages people to immediately call for help if they identify any one of the three symptoms in either themselves or others.

“With strokes, every second counts and the sooner you get to hospital the more chance that emergency treatment such as clot-busting drugs (thrombolysis) can be given. These drugs can be very effective but there is only a short window within which they can be given.

“We’ve made tremendous achievements in the quality of our stroke care in recent years, but we need people to help us to help them by coming to hospital as soon as they possibly can after they have suffered a stroke to maximise their chances of making a good recovery.

“Being aware of the signs and symptoms can make the difference between somebody who has suffered a stroke making a good or full recovery, or being severely incapacitated.”

Ends

The FAST test

The FAST test is a simple assessment of three specific symptoms of stroke which anyone can carry out:

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 **999**



Caption: l to r:

Shelia Davies, volunteer with the Stroke Association, and Doctor Judy Towers talk through some advice about stroke with patient Mr Eric Cooper and his daughter.