



Rx: Health Care FYI #52

Subject: *Improving Treatment for Stroke*
From: *Rep. Tim Murphy (PA-18)*
Date: *March 18, 2007*

The problem: Stroke is the third leading cause of death, behind heart disease and cancer.¹ Seventy-five percent of patients do not arrive at an emergency department during the critical first three hours required for effective treatments at the onset of stroke symptoms, since many do not recognize the symptoms or the hospital is not equipped to properly treat stroke. This results in increased mortality, morbidity, and costs (treatment and rehabilitation).²

What is a stroke?

- A stroke is an interruption of the blood supply to any part of the brain. A stroke is sometimes called a "brain attack." A stroke can happen when: A blood vessel carrying blood to the brain is blocked by a blood clot. This is called an ischemic stroke. Or, when a blood vessel breaks open, causing blood to leak into the brain. This is a hemorrhagic stroke.³

Strokes cost lives:

- Each year, about 700,000 people suffer a stroke. About 500,000 of these are first attacks, and 200,000 are recurrent attacks.⁴
- Stroke killed 275,000 people in 2002 and accounted for about 1 of almost 15 deaths in the United States.⁵
- Up until age 80, more men than women have a stroke. Stroke tends to occur earlier in men than women.⁶
- About 47 percent of stroke deaths occur out of a hospital.⁷
- On average, someone in the United States suffers a stroke every 45 seconds; every 3.1 minutes someone dies of a stroke.⁸
- Stroke is the leading cause of serious, long-term disability in the United States.⁹

¹ U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics - 2005 Update, published by the American Heart Association.

² American Heart Association. Registry review shows many factors hinder acute stroke care. May 12, 2005.

³ Medline Plus. Medical Encyclopedia. U.S. National Library of Medicine. National Institutes of Health. June 27, 2005.

⁴ U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics – 2005.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

Strokes cost money:

- The financial impact of stroke in the United States is approximately \$50,000 per stroke patient, or \$25 billion per year.¹⁰ In addition, direct health care costs in the year following a stroke average \$25,181 per patient. Stroke reduced the probability of employment by 19.7 percent and accounted for an annual increase of 12.8 work disability days, for a total productivity loss of \$9,928 per patient.¹¹
- Strokes from obesity increase costs by \$8.1 billion annually.¹²

Receiving proper treatment for strokes saves money:

- An analysis of data from more than 2,700 stroke patients in both the United States and Europe has confirmed that when the drug tPA (tissue plasminogen activator), is given within 3 hours of stroke symptoms, it reduces the risk of additional hemorrhage, and maximizes the potential for patient recovery for a cost savings of nearly \$50 million a year in the United States alone.¹³

Recommendations:

- Pass H.R. 477, the Stroke Treatment and Ongoing Prevention Act to implement a national education campaign to promote stroke prevention, improve education programs of health care professionals on stroke prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation and establish pilot programs to coordinate health care for stroke prevention through telehealth networks.
- Ensure local Emergency Medical Services (EMS) responders have access to clot-busting drugs to treat strokes.
- EMS must have accurate information regarding hospitals that are qualified centers to treat stroke. (Not all hospitals have the essential treatments available including 24 hour radiologists and full access to treatments for ischemic and hemorrhagic stroke).
- Target stroke prevention, including preventive care services, before a patient leaves a hospital in campaigns to high-risk populations and geographic areas where there is a high incidence of stroke.
- Create a medical advisory group to formulate recommendations to Congress on measures to improve the quality of treatment for stroke victims.

¹⁰ Rizzo, John. Study Indicates Cost of Healthcare and Productivity Loss for Stroke Patients In U.S. Is Nearly \$50,000 per Year. Yale University. May 1998.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² American Obesity Association/The Lewin Group. Costs of Obesity. September 13, 2000.

¹³ NIH. Fact Sheet on Stroke.