“BE FAST” When It Comes to Stroke

During National Stroke Awareness Month, NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital’s Stroke Centers Offer Tips on How to Recognize and Prevent Strokes

New York, NY (PRWEB) May 11, 2015 -- A stroke can happen in an instant, changing a person’s life forever. Strokes – 80 percent of which are caused by a blood clot that blocks blood flow to the brain – are medical emergencies that require immediate attention. The earlier a stroke is recognized and treated, the greater the chance of recovery. Remembering the acronym BE FAST is an easy way to learn how to recognize a stroke and what to do to minimize its long-term damaging effects.

Other symptoms of a stroke include a sudden weakness or numbness in the face, arms or legs, specifically on one side of the body; dizziness and trouble walking; or a sudden severe headache that occurs for no apparent reason.

“When someone has a stroke, they may show either slight or extremely noticeable physical changes,” says Dr. Randolph Marshall, chief of the Stroke Division at NewYork-Presbyterian/Columbia University Medical Center. “The most effective way to prevent the permanent damage associated with stroke is to recognize the signs of an attack and to seek medical attention immediately.”

Early treatment can prevent, and in some cases, reverse damage caused by strokes, but only if the treatment begins within a few hours of onset of symptoms. One of the most common treatments is tissue plasminogen activator (t-PA), the only FDA-approved clot-dissolving drug for acute ischemic stroke. The drug is injected into an artery or vein to dissolve the clot, restoring blood flow to the brain. Another treatment is revascularization, in which microcatheters are inserted into the artery to remove the blockages and reopen the artery. For all treatment options, early intervention can improve outcomes.

Stroke Prevention Tips
Taking the time to make a few simple lifestyle adjustments can save thousands of lives each year.

“Although stroke is very common and is the leading cause of disability in adults in the U.S., most can be attributed to modifiable risk factors,” says Dr. Ji Y. Chong, director of the Stroke Center at NewYork-Presbyterian/Lower Manhattan Hospital. “These are risk factors that can be controlled. Treatment of high blood pressure, high cholesterol, cardiac arrhythmias and diabetes can have a very high impact on lowering risk of stroke.”

Several lifestyle changes can greatly reduce the risk of having a stroke:

• Reduce salt intake. High blood pressure is one of the leading causes of stroke. Cutting back on salt is one of the most significant steps to maintaining or lowering blood pressure to a healthy level of 130/80 or below. Try flavoring your food with a variety of spices that may be healthier than salt.
• Improve your diet. If you are obese or overweight, you are not only more likely to develop high cholesterol, high blood pressure and diabetes, you are more likely to have a stroke. Extra weight places an added strain on your entire circulatory system, but a heart healthy diet helps to reduce stroke risk and can help in losing those extra pounds.
• Stop smoking. Smoking is bad not only for your lungs, but for your brain as well. A smoker is at twice the risk of having a stroke because smoking damages blood vessels, raises blood pressure and speeds up the
clogging of arteries.

- Exercise. Exercise benefits everyone, so we should all aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise most days to improve our overall health.

Certain populations are at a higher risk of having a stroke even after making the proper lifestyle changes. These include adults 55 years of age or older, African-Americans and Hispanics, those with a family history of stroke, and people who have already had a stroke or a transient ischemic attack (mini-stroke). In addition, women are more likely to die from a stroke than men, although attacks are more common in men.

NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital treats one of the highest volumes of stroke and cerebrovascular disease patients in the world and the highest in NYC. The hospital has four state-designated Primary Stroke Centers and is recognized by the American Heart Association’s Honor Roll-Elite program. Stroke patients treated at high-volume centers with specialty-trained physicians have the best survival and recovery rates.

NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital

NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital, based in New York City, is one of the nation’s largest and most comprehensive hospitals and a leading provider of inpatient, ambulatory and preventive care in all areas of medicine. With some 2,600 beds and more than 6,500 affiliated physicians and 20,000 employees, NewYork-Presbyterian had more than 2 million visits in 2013, including close to 15,000 infant deliveries and more than 310,000 emergency department visits. NewYork-Presbyterian comprises six campuses: NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center, NewYork-Presbyterian/Columbia University Medical Center, NewYork-Presbyterian/Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital, NewYork-Presbyterian/The Allen Hospital, NewYork-Presbyterian/Westchester Division and NewYork-Presbyterian/Lower Manhattan Hospital. The hospital is also closely affiliated with NewYork-Presbyterian/Hudson Valley Hospital and NewYork-Presbyterian/Lawrence Hospital. NewYork-Presbyterian is the #1 hospital in the New York metropolitan area, according to U.S. News & World Report, and consistently named to the magazine’s Honor Roll of best hospitals in the nation. Affiliated with two world-renowned medical schools, Weill Cornell Medical College and Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, NewYork-Presbyterian is committed to excellence in patient care, research, education and community service. For more information, visit www.nyp.org.
Contact Information
Christina Stolfo
NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital
+1 (212) 821-0560

Online Web 2.0 Version
You can read the online version of this press release here.