

World Stroke Day – ICN Statement

Geneva, Switzerland, 29 October 2019 – World Stroke Day (29.10.2019) is an annual event which brings global attention to the key issues of stroke and to advocate for actions on stroke prevention. The most recent estimates in the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) show that stroke is the second highest cause of morbidity and mortality worldwide and today, one in four people will have a stroke.

Stroke remains one of the major global health threats and there is an alarming increase in stroke incidence in low- and middle-income countries. In order to strengthen international efforts to address the burden of stroke, WHO and UN actions on NCD have identified stroke as one of the prioritized NCDs.

Stroke is preventable and treatable. World Stroke Day emphasizes addressing the risk factors of stroke. It also highlights the importance of health care providers' roles in surveillance, prevention, acute care and rehabilitation. Stroke can have profound, long-term impacts on the lives of patient and their families and caregivers. Stroke survivors need to cope with the physical and psychological aftereffects of the disease. Nurses are the largest group of health professionals working with stroke patients and have a pivotal role in all aspects across the continuum of care.

It is estimated that 90% of strokes are linked to 10 key risk factors. Nurses are the principal providers of primary health care in many countries. They play a crucial role in expanding access to primary health care, including stroke prevention, health education, identifying risk factors for stroke (i.e. hypertension, diabetes, smoking, high cholesterol level, etc.), early detection for signs of stroke and initiating treatment early. Effective prevention strategies have proved to greatly reduce stroke mortality and nurses are well positioned to contribute and lead these. Nurses also organise community prevention programmes to empower communities and support individuals with healthy lifestyle modifications.

Early recognition and rapid treatment are critical for the survival rate and recovery from stroke patients. All members of the public should be able to recognise the signs and symptoms of stroke and nurses can support this. In hospital settings, nurses provide services ranging from acute care management, specialised stroke care, complex multi-morbidity management to stroke rehabilitation. Nurses also take up a central role in multidisciplinary professional team to ensure stroke patients will be restored to their greatest potential and to reduce the chances of stroke recurrence.

Access to acute and chronic health services is important to stroke patients. When nurses are able to work to their full scope, they can initiate early stroke treatment and improve the access to specialised stroke care. In many countries, specialised nurses lead nurse-led stroke clinics and coordinate stroke care services to help stroke survivors regain independence and quality of life.

Nurses are uniquely placed health professionals who provide continuous care and support to stroke patients and their families across settings with a life-course approach.

As NCD will continue to increase in the coming decades, there is an urgent need to scale up actions. Bold action should be taken to significantly improve resources for NCD prevention, address the risk factors and strengthen the capacity and capability of health professionals in NCDs management.

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