Support for stroke survivors and their carers

Maleny stroke survivors and their carers don’t have to face recovery and rehabilitation alone.

The Maleny Soldiers Memorial Hospital Stroke Support Group offers support, education and a place to share personal experiences of their post-stroke journey.

The Hospital’s senior occupational therapist, Rhianna Friend, said the Group was formed last year to provide the opportunity for those affected by stroke to come together at the Hospital and support one another.

“Medical and allied health staff provide information sessions on topics such as ‘depression following stroke’, ‘falls prevention’, and ‘healthy diet following stroke’,” Ms Friend said.

“Stroke is one of Australia’s most common cause of death and a leading cause of disability; statistics indicate that one in six people will have a stroke in their lifetime.

“This affects someone’s mother, father, partner, sibling, child, relative or friend.”

The group was formed by Maleny stroke survivor Elizabeth (Liz) Beim, who was 63 years old and in very good health when she had an ischaemic stroke two years ago.

“I was working as a senior radiologist and was quite fit, running and gardening in my spare time,” Ms Beim said.

“When I had my stroke, I was initially paralysed on my right side and I had difficulty with my speech and my ability to both understand communication and express myself.

“The stroke also affected my memory, the speed and way I processed my thoughts, my problem solving and how I managed complex daily activities,” she said.

“I have been in recovery from my stroke for the last two years, with help and support from my husband Donald. I received such high quality and intense therapy services as an inpatient at Maleny Soldiers Memorial Hospital, however my recovery is an ongoing process that is now a part of my daily life.

“I have worked hard every single day, with the support of a number of Allied Health disciplines, to regain my speech and language, cognitive and physical abilities,” Ms Beim said.

“I realised it’s much easier with support from those who understand, and so I started the stroke support group to help connect others, and their carers, who have also experienced stroke’s life changing effects.”
Ms Friend said Liz’s recovery was an inspiration to those around her.

“She has achieved so much. She is now working on returning to running, and is able to use her affected arm to write, use a computer and has even passed an assessment to return to driving,” Ms Friend said.

Ms Friend said many members of the group had previously attended inpatient rehabilitation in the sub-acute rehabilitation unit at Maleny Soldiers Memorial Hospital.

“There has been a really positive response and good attendance from stroke survivors who have expressed an interest in further developing a network of support, having transitioned from hospital back into living in the community,” she said.

The stroke support group meets every second month at Maleny Soldiers Memorial Hospital. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, 20 January 2016 at the Maleny Soldiers Memorial Hospital, with a talk on depression post-stroke, by Dr Nick Milns, Senior Medical Officer.

For information on the group please contact Rhianna Friend, Senior Occupational Therapist at Maleny Soldiers Memorial Hospital on 5420 5000.

Information on stroke

- The FAST test is an easy way to recognise and remember the signs of stroke. Using the FAST test involves asking these simple questions:
  - **Face** Check their face. Has their mouth drooped?
  - **Arm** Can they lift both arms?
  - **Speech** Is their speech slurred? Do they understand you?
  - **Time** Time is critical. If you see any of these signs, call 000 immediately.
- Every 10 minutes an Australian will have a stroke.
- Stroke is one of Australia’s most common cause of death and a leading cause of disability.
- One in six people will have a stroke in their lifetime.
- Stroke kills more women than breast cancer and more men than prostate cancer.
- 65 per cent of those living with stroke also suffer a disability that impedes their ability to carry out daily living activities unassisted.
- See more at: https://strokefoundation.com.au/about-stroke/facts-and-figures-about-stroke#sthash.xmM2mB8j.dpu

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