

MEDIA RELEASE

8 September 2016

Stroke treatment keeps elderly patients in good stead

The Toowoomba Hospital's Geriatric, Adult Rehabilitation and Stroke Service (GARRS) is reminding residents about the importance of seeking immediate medical help at the first sign of stroke after the successful treatment of two patients recently.

Both 93-year-old Dorothy Row and 94-year-old Margaret Robins were treated with the revolutionary "stroke lysis" treatment at the Toowoomba Hospital within 90 minutes of first exhibiting stroke symptoms. The treatment is basically a fast-acting, clot-busting injection that reverses the effects of stroke.

Thanks to this treatment, both Ms Row and Ms Robins have made remarkable recoveries; something that could not have been guaranteed two or three years ago.

"Recent changes in stroke clinical practice now means patients aged over 80 years have access to the same emergency stroke treatment as younger patients," GARRS director and geriatrician Dr Nisal Gange said.

"And with some of these older patients, we are seeing even greater results, compared to patients aged less than 80 years."

Toowoomba resident Margaret Robins was walking home from the city library when she collapsed. She is thankful that two strangers came to her aid, recognised the symptoms of stroke and organised an ambulance to take her to Toowoomba Hospital.

"Margaret's experience proves that it doesn't matter what the person's age is, you have to act immediately and get them to hospital," Ms Robins' niece Rochelle Jesser said.

Fellow local, Dorothy Row, is also thankful for the quick actions of strangers after she started exhibiting symptoms during a trip to the hairdresser. Dorothy was unable to speak and was disorientated, however, 24 hours after treatment she started to regain her faculties.

Dr Gange said if stroke was suspected the key was to seek medical help immediately.

"If someone experiences facial weakness, is unable to lift both arms, or is having difficulty speaking, don't make an appointment to see a GP, call triple-0 immediately and get to the emergency department of Toowoomba Hospital for assessment," Dr Gange said.

Both patients thanked the efforts of the entire GARRS multi-disciplinary team which includes: medical, nursing, occupational therapists, social workers, psychologists, podiatrists, dieticians, pharmacists, speech pathologists and physiotherapists.

Use the following FAST guide if stroke is suspected:

- F for face - check the person's face and see if their mouth has dropped

- A for arms - see if they can lift both arms
- S for speech – see if their speech is slurred or impaired and check if they can understand what you are saying
- T for time – time is critical so if you see any of these symptoms call Triple-0

Background information:

- The Toowoomba Hospital Stroke Unit started on 11 February 2013.
- Toowoomba Hospital is the only facility in the Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service that offers the stroke lysis program and the service is available 24-hours a day, seven days a week.
- Stroke lysis treatment is only suitable for certain types of strokes, but when used appropriately within four and-a-half hours of the first symptoms of stroke, it can deliver excellent results.
- Toowoomba Hospital's average 'door to needle' time for lysis treatment, which measures the time between when a patient enters the hospital and when they are administered with a clot-busting injection, is 53 minutes, compared to the national average of 87 minutes.
- At Toowoomba Hospital stroke lysis treatment is administered to 10 per cent of stroke patients, compared to the state average of eight per cent and the national average of seven per cent.
- The Toowoomba Hospital Stroke Unit operates in conjunction with the hospital's Geriatric, Adult Rehabilitation and Stroke Service (GARSS).

Ends

Captions:

"Stoke lysis patients 1"

Stroke patient Dorothy Row with Toowoomba Hospital's stroke care co-ordinator Tim Richardson.

"Stoke lysis patients 2"

Stroke patient Margaret Robins (left) with her niece Rochelle Jesser.

MEDIA: Contact Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service Media Team 4699 8547, 0438 702 328 or DDHHS_media@health.qld.gov.au