8 September 2014

National Stroke Week
8 – 14 September 2014

During National Stroke Week (8 – 14 September), the Acute Stroke Team at Nambour General Hospital aims to encourage Sunshine Coast residents to become more aware of the early signs of a stroke, highlight the risks of experiencing this illness and what can be done to prevent a stroke.

Dr Rohan Grimley, Senior Medical Officer at Nambour Hospital and the Chair of the Queensland Statewide Stroke Clinical Network said strokes occurred when the blood supply to part of the brain was interrupted.

“When brain cells do not get enough oxygen or nutrients, they die, and because brain cells usually die shortly after the stroke starts, it is imperative help is sought as quickly as possible,” Dr Grimley said.

“Time saved means brain cells are saved. Nearly two million neurones die every minute in the initial hours after a stroke.”

Cooloola Cove resident David Carkeek is living proof of the benefit of early recognition, intervention and treatment of stroke.

David had the most severe type of ischaemic (clot) stroke in April 2014 when he experienced a sudden onset of weakness and tingling to the right side of his body, visual and speech disturbance.

He was rushed to Gympie Hospital Emergency Department and in a co-ordinated response between Gympie Hospital, Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) officers and Nambour Hospital, he was urgently transported to Nambour General Hospital, arriving with minutes to spare in order to receive intravenous thrombolysis therapy (a clot busting treatment). The therapy must be given within a strict time-frame to offer the desired benefits.

When David arrived at Nambour, he was unable to walk or move his right upper limb, he had impaired thinking processes, partial visual blindness and his speech was severely affected. Even speaking one simple word without delay was a challenge for him.
Today David is totally independent and living at home with his wife. He has fluent speech, and his fine motor skills have returned enabling him to pursue his retirement interests.

As well as prompt emergency department treatment, early admission to a specialized stroke unit is one of the biggest factors affecting chances of survival and return of independence. Nambour General Hospital Acute Stroke Unit provides treatments based on the latest research and the Unit boasts a full complement of dedicated medical, nursing and allied health staff to maximise the chances of recovery.

The Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service has also incorporated Telehealth into stroke care with the opening of an Acute Stroke Unit at Gympie Hospital with stroke specialist support and guidance from Nambour.

This enables urgent specialist review of acute TIA (mini stroke) and follow-up consultations to stroke patients in Gympie allowing them to interact with their health care professional without the need to travel far.

The Acute Stroke Units together with local rehabilitation services work to support both patients and their loved ones.

Dr Grimley encourages members of the Sunshine Coast community to join the challenge to reduce the risks of stroke and familiarise themselves with the early signs of a stroke.

“It is critical people get to hospital to receive the right treatment by specialised staff in time to avoid long term disability or even death,” Dr Grimley said

**Media opportunity:** The Acute Stroke Unit (Ward 3FW) will celebrate Stroke week with an informal healthy lunch at work on Tuesday 9 September at 12.00 noon.

A doctor, a speech therapist, a dietician, and other members of the Acute Stroke Team will be available for interview.

**ENDS**

**Stroke facts**
- One in six people will have a stroke and many more are directly impacted by the death and disability of a loved one or workmate.
- Stroke is Australia’s second biggest killer after coronary heart disease and a leading cause of disability.
- Stroke kills more women than breast cancer and more men than prostate cancer.
- The risk of stroke increases with age and Australian Government statistics show that by 2050, the number of people aged 65 to 84 is expected to more than double and those aged 85 and over to more than quadruple.
- For free information and advice on strokes, call the Stroke Line to talk to a health professional. 1800 STROKE (787 653) or visit [http://strokefoundation.com.au](http://strokefoundation.com.au)
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