

HealthSouth and the American Stroke Association Join Forces to Increase Stroke Awareness Among Americans

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HealthSouth Corporation, the nation's largest provider of rehabilitative healthcare services, and the American Stroke Association, a division of the American Heart Association, have teamed up to create a new initiative called the Stroke Rehabilitation Awareness Campaign. The primary goal of this program is to teach Americans about the stroke warning signs and symptoms, as well as educate stroke survivors about the benefits of stroke rehabilitation.

Stroke is the third-leading cause of death in the United States and a leading cause of serious, long-term disability. Below are some additional facts about stroke in this country:

- * About 600,000 strokes occur each year.
- * On average, someone suffers a stroke every 53 seconds.
- * Currently, there are 4.4 million stroke survivors.
- * Every 3.3 minutes someone dies of a stroke.

Studies indicate that 60 percent of stroke survivors can benefit from aggressive rehabilitation intervention, with more than 80 percent of those treated through rehabilitation services returning to their homes, work, schools or active retirement.

"We are thrilled about working with HealthSouth because we now can extend our educational messages to a broader audience through their health channels," said Edgar Kenton, M.D., Chair of the American Stroke Association's Advisory Committee and Chief of Cerebral Vascular Diseases at the MainLine/Jefferson Health System in Wynnewood, Pennsylvania. "According to a recent survey, less than 25 percent of Americans can name the most common warning sign of stroke. Therefore, the more people know about stroke, the better the opportunity to save their own life or someone else's. And the sooner stroke rehabilitation begins, the greater the chance of someone leading a productive life."

The Stroke Rehabilitation Awareness Campaign will urge people to call 9-1-1 if they experience the warning signs of a stroke, which are: sudden numbness or weakness of face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body; sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding; sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes; sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination; and sudden severe headache with no known cause.

The campaign will also teach survivors how to cope with life after a stroke and recover through rehabilitation. Rehabilitation aims to hasten and maximize recovery by treating the disabilities caused by stroke. Rehabilitation restores function, teaches people with disabilities new ways to perform daily activities and provides education and support for the stroke survivor and family.

"We are proud to be able to team up with the American Stroke Association in this educational effort," says Richard M. Scrushy, HealthSouth's chairman of the board and chief executive officer. "Through our nationwide network of rehabilitation hospitals, we hope to not only increase awareness of stroke warning signs, but also educate stroke survivors, families and the general public about the value of rehabilitation and the importance of early stroke intervention."

As part of the campaign, the two organizations are also working on pilot programs to provide free stroke screenings to consumers in designated areas across the country.

"Nearly 25 percent of the 14,000 patients we treat each day are recovering from stroke in our rehabilitation hospitals," adds Robert E. Thomson, president and chief operating officer of HealthSouth's inpatient division. "This percentage represents a small fraction of the people who could benefit from rehabilitation and return to independent and fulfilling lives. This partnership will enable us to further enhance our support of stroke survivors and their families."

The American Stroke Association was created in November 1998 as part of a strategic decision to spotlight and strengthen the American Heart Association's effort to reduce death and disability from stroke through research, education, fund raising and advocacy. The American Stroke Association offers a wide array of programs, products and services, from patient education materials to scientific statements with cutting-edge information for healthcare professionals.

Consumers can learn more about stroke by calling 1-888-4STROKE or take an online, stroke risk assessment quiz by visiting <http://www.strokeassociation.org/>.

HealthSouth Corporation, based in Birmingham, Ala., is the nation's largest provider of ambulatory surgery, diagnostic imaging and rehabilitative healthcare services, with more than 2,000 locations in all 50 states, the United Kingdom, Australia, Puerto Rico and Canada. HealthSouth can be found on the Web at <http://www.healthsouth.com/>.

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