

Stroke Club

A publication for stroke survivors and their families

February 2016



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HEART HEALTHY: Following the Path along the Food Pyramid

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!! We hope you all had a wonderful Holiday Season and best wishes for a great 2016!!

We will soon be gathering together again, once a month for Stroke Club. As a reminder Stroke Club meets the 3rd Tuesday of each month from February through and including October.

The first Stroke Club meeting of 2016 is Tuesday February 16th at 7:00 p.m., at New Hope United Methodist Church located at 4525 Beaver Ave., Des Moines. The church is accessible.

This month the presentation will be titled: ***“Heart Healthy Eating: Choosing your plate Wisely”***

In recent years there have been changes to dietary recommendations and the development of Choosing Your Plate. While we recognize the importance of nutrition to maintaining health sometimes it's easy to have difficulty sorting out the information: fresh foods versus frozen, organics, portion size and food choices when eating out.

We have asked Brian Smith, RD, LD, a Clinical Nutrition Operations Manager for the 4 hospitals of UnityPoint Health Des Moines, the Nutrition Centre at UnityPoint Health Des Moines and a consultant dietitian of UnityPoint Health in the Des Moines area to come and share information and ideas on heart healthy strategies in making food choices. Brian didn't become a dietitian until age 38, having spent time studying languages, being an entrepreneur in agribusiness,

manager for Meals on Wheels in Polk County and a cook for a hospice care facility. He has lived, studied and worked for extended periods of time in several different countries. Join for an evening of education and yummy ideas!

This Month the Stroke Club is once again sponsored by the Iowa State Fraternal Order of Eagles.

The Fraternal Order of Eagles is an international non-profit organization uniting fraternally in the spirit of liberty, truth, justice, and equality, to make human life more desirable by lessening its ills and promoting peace, prosperity, gladness and hope. Their motto is “People Helping People”

Each year their members hold fundraisers all over the country and then give grants to non-profit organizations. They have a long history of giving generously and the Stroke Club received a grant to help sponsor the newsletters and meetings. You can find out more about the Fraternal Order of Eagles at www.foeiowa.com

Stroke Club would like to thank the Iowa State Fraternal Order of Eagles for sponsoring this issue of the newsletter.

As a reminder if you have something special you would like to see in the newsletter please don't hesitate to let me know. My phone # is 515-241-8139, my email address is sue.toaleknapp@unitypoint.org

*Thanks, your Newsletter Editor,
Sue Toale Knapp.*

Need a Lift

Need a ride to Stroke Club Meeting?

Call Amy Johnson at 263-5166 to arrange a ride.

Please call her rather than the person who may be your “usual driver”. This will allow Amy to know how to plan for rides and drivers. If you are afraid you will forget to call, do it now!! Please call no later than 9:00am the day before the meeting and preferably the Friday before the Tuesday meeting. This will allow Amy enough time to schedule a ride for you.

You will receive a call before the meeting regarding who will pick you up the night of meeting. We have several volunteers who are willing to provide you a ride to Stroke Club.



7 Reasons to Dwell on the Positive

Research shows that gratitude and happiness are strongly connected. Happy people enjoy these perks:

1. You're likely to feel more optimistic.

Noticing and analyzing what goes well in life may help you build the skill of remembering good events over bad, which is linked to feeling happier.

2. You could live longer.

Happier people with positive outlooks that are enhanced by feeling gratitude tend to have longer lives.

3. You may feel less physical pain.

Stress amplifies pain, and thinking positive thoughts, such as what is working in your life or how things are starting to get better and better, help you cope with stress.

4. Your relationships may feel more meaningful.

Thinking about the people who are blessing to you makes those connections feel more satisfying.

5. You'll possibly catch fewer colds.

Research shows that people who count their blessings report that they have fewer sniffles and sneezes.

6. You may even exercise more.

Positive emotions have been shown to boost energy. Highlighting the good things in your life may also remind you of the many reasons to stay healthy.

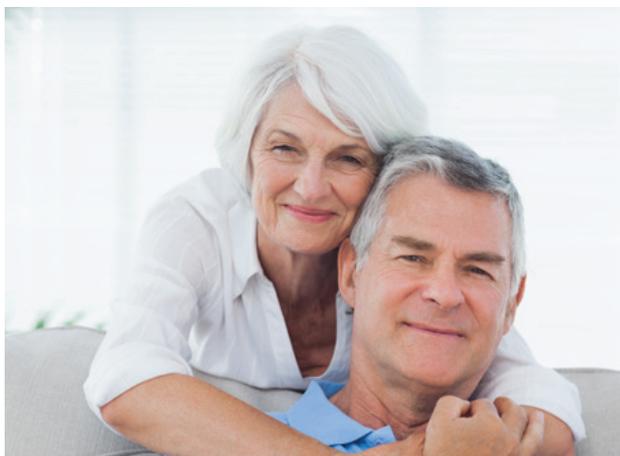
7. Your heart could grow stronger.

Experiencing positive emotions like appreciation is linked with the right amount of variation in heart rate, a sign of a healthy ticker.

Reference: Woman's Day Magazine December 2015/January 2016

A REMINDER OF WHAT YOU WILL FIND AT STROKE CLUB:

- Friendly people, like you, who have survived a stroke
- Care providers of stroke survivors: wives, husbands, sons, daughters
- Rehabilitation professionals: PT's, OT's, Speech Language Pathologists, Social Workers, Recreational Therapists, Nurses and Rehab Administrators
- A large lending library of books, videotapes and home therapy materials
- Great Door Prizes!!



Online Support Group

For those of you looking for an online support group here is a website for you: <http://www.strokenetwork.org/>.

It is a very active group. You have to join like a listserv and you post a question or issue and the group will email you back suggestions. Everyone in the group has survived a stroke and has great ideas they are willing to share.

Think You Are Having A Stroke? Call 9-1-1 Immediately!



F.A.S.T. is an easy way to remember the sudden signs of stroke. When you can spot the signs, you'll know that you need to call 9-1-1 for help right away. F.A.S.T. is:

F - Face Drooping – Does one side of the face droop or is it numb? Ask the person to smile. Is the person's smile uneven?

A - Arm Weakness – Is one arm weak or numb? Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?

S - Speech Difficulty – Is speech slurred? Is the person unable to speak or hard to understand? Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence, like "The sky is blue." Is the sentence repeated correctly?

T - Time to call 9-1-1 – If someone shows any of these symptoms, even if the symptoms go away, call 9-1-1 and get the person to the hospital immediately. Check the time so you'll know when the first symptoms appeared.

Beyond F.A.S.T. – Other Symptoms You Should Know

- Sudden **NUMBNESS** or weakness of face, arm, or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden **CONFUSION**, trouble speaking or understanding speech
- Sudden **TROUBLE SEEING** in one or both eyes
- Sudden **TROUBLE WALKING**, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden **SEVERE HEADACHE** with no known cause

If someone shows any of these symptoms, immediately call 9-1-1 or emergency medical services.

F.A.S.T. is an easy way to remember the sudden signs and symptoms of stroke.

Caregiver CORNER

Caregiver Stress
By Kathy Bosworth

More than one quarter of the adult population (26.6%) has provided care for a chronically ill, disabled or aged family member or friend during the past year. Based on current data, that translates into more than 50 million people! Sixty-one percent of “intense” caregivers (those providing at least 21 hours of care a week) have suffered from depression. Heavy-duty caregivers, especially spousal caregivers, do not get consistent help from other family members. One study has shown that as many as three fourths of these caregivers are “going it alone.” Is it any surprise that caregiver stress or burnout is becoming a critical issue?

Dealing with stress is not a new concept. None of us have immunity from the challenges of getting through life with the least amount of stress. Some people drink, over eat, smoke, bite their nails, yell at the cat, or retreat inside themselves when the going gets too tough. I’m sure you have your own ways of protecting yourself from the ravages of stress. I have often thought my cat has the right idea when stress enters her life. After one loud meow and an angry swish of her tail, she retreats to another room to take a nice long two-hour snooze. Bam! The stress is gone. Unfortunately, people do not have the same luxury.

Are you caught in the web of stress while being a caregiver? In the book, “Living with Stroke”, there is an interesting section on stroke stress analysis. People list nine sentences that sum up all the different ways that stress exhibits itself in families of stroke survivors.

Do any of these ring a bell with you?

PANIC

“Ohmigod, I can’t handle this.”

ANXIETY

“What if he needs me in the middle of the night and I can’t hear him?”

DENIAL THAT LEADS TO OVER-OPTIMISM

“Oh, he’ll be fine. He just needs to come home.”

IRRITABILITY AND ANGER

“It’s all the rehabilitation team’s fault.”

FRUSTRATION

“I can’t stand one more thing going wrong!”

FATIGUE

“I’m utterly, completely exhausted from the experience.”

HOPELESSNESS AND HELPLESSNESS

“What’s the use? Nothing’s going to change.”

GUILT

“How can I be so angry at him? It’s not fair.”

AMBIVALENCE

“I don’t know how I feel anymore. I can’t make a decision about anything.”



If you are a caregiver, I’m sure you find yourself nodding your head at more than a few of these stress indicators. I often say that caregiving is not something that people plan on or sign up for. It is a situation that sort of plops itself in your lap, totally unexpected. Caregivers are usually overwhelmed, untrained, and uneducated in the beginning. With time comes a sense of control that can help you through. Being out of control in any situation can knock a person off balance. Don’t be too hard on yourself as you muddle through this. You are a rookie now, but you are getting some heavy on-the-job training.

Here are some tips that I have found to be helpful in getting your life in balance again.

- When well-meaning people offer to help, accept their help. Be specific in things you could use help with. Now is not the time to show the world how strong you are. You will only burn out quicker without help.
- Watch out for signs of depression. Get professional help if you need to.
- Educate yourself about your loved one’s condition. Information is empowering!
- Trust your gut feelings. I’m a firm believer in our innate instincts. If something sounds out of whack to you, keep asking questions

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- until you are satisfied that the best care is being administered.
- Find other caregivers to connect with. There are many caregiver websites and support groups that can be found. If there are none in your area, start your own. Believe me, you need somebody to talk to that understands what you are going through.
- Be kind to yourself. Even if you only take a ten-minute walk around the block to alleviate some stress, DO IT. A caregiver with a lower stress level makes a much better caregiver. Getting enough sleep, exercise, and eating balanced meals reduces stress.
- If you are caring for a parent and have siblings, be vocal about what they can do to help. Some people are not comfortable with the day-to-day care but they might be willing to grocery shop for you, pick up meds, or do a doctor's run or two. Don't be a martyr. Your emotional health cannot take it. Face it and get on with it.
- Take charge of your life and continue to do things that you find relaxing or pleasurable. If a loved one's disability always takes center stage instead of your needs, you will become a resentful caregiver. Not good for anyone.
- Write down things to keep your head uncluttered. Having ongoing lists of medications your loved one is taking will not only alleviate the stress of trying to remember what and when, but it is also a valuable tool when visiting the doctor. It's all written out and accessible. Doctors are often rushed and cannot wait around while you try to remember which meds are causing what side effects, etc. Keep it simple and easy on yourself in ways that you can.
- Keep your sense of humor. It's the most important tool you have and it's free. Humor can be found in the most surprising places, even hospitals and nursing homes. Laughter is good for the soul.
- Know your limitations! Don't let guilt get in the way of making the best decision for your family member and yourself. Not everyone can be a caregiver no matter how good their intentions might be. If you cannot be a caregiver due to an emotional, physical, financial or locational burden, you do have choices. You cannot help another if you yourself need help. The medical needs might warrant the need for assisted living or long term care. If you must find alternative living arrangements, make sure they are ones you can live with and serve the best interest of your loved one! Stay involved and vigilant that the care remains good.
- Caregiving is a huge responsibility. Keeping the caregiver healthy—physically, mentally, and emotionally — is vital. Try to find the right balance in your life that allows you to care for your loved one while caring for yourself.

OTHER HELPFUL WEBSITES FOR CAREGIVERS:

Family Caregiver Alliance: www.caregiver.org
National Family Caregivers Association: www.nfca.org
National Alliance for Caregiving: www.caregiving.org
Today's Caregiver: www.caregiver.com
Kathy Bosworth is the author of "Your Mother has Suffered a Slight Stroke."
 See www.authorsden.com/kathybosworth
 Reference: caregiver.com



Your 4-Week Happiness Plan

Week 1:

Grab a notebook and write down three things that go well every other day for one week, along with a simple explanation.

Week 2:

Send a quick email each day to someone in your life, explaining why he or she is a blessing to you.

Week 3:

Think about things other than your stuff. A 2014 study found that people who are more materialistic are less grateful. Try to focus on the pure, lovely white snow falling outside, not on the fancy new car parked in your neighbor's driveway.

Week 4:

Don't forget to say thank you. Thank the drive-through server for including extra ketchup; thank a stranger for holding the door open for you. Expressing gratitude will give both of you and the other person a lift.

Reference: Women's Day Magazine, December 2015/ January 2016

Food for Thought

Eat your way to a sharper mind with these nutrient-packed mini meals.

By Mallory Creveling



7 Halved Walnuts + 1Tbsp Sunflower seeds +2 Tbsp Dried Cherries= Quick Thinking

The ingredients in this homemade trail mix burst with anti-inflammatory agents that improve brain function. Omega-3 fatty acids in walnuts have also been shown to boost learning and memory, and their vitamin E shields cells from damage caused by free radicals, explains Jennifer McDaniel, RDN, a spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

1 can chickpeas + 1 Tbsp turmeric + 1 Tbsp olive oil=Concentration cure

“Chickpeas are rich in B vitamins, which help reduce brain cell shrinkage and offer up a slow yet steady source of carbs to keep your mind focused,” says McDaniel. The spice adds an antioxidant and anti-inflammatory kick to enhance brain performance and fight Alzheimer’s. Drain the chickpeas, toss them with the turmeric and oil, spread out on a baking sheet and bake at 425 degrees for at least 15 minutes – longer if you want more crunch. You’ll get three ½-cup servings.

1 hard-boiled egg + ½ tsp horseradish = Total Recall

Choline, an essential nutrient found in yolks, is key to maintaining memory because it encourages clear communication between brain cells. Eggs also have vitamin D, a necessity for neural function, explains David Perimutter, MD, author of Brain Maker. For more zing and extra support for cell growth, McDaniel suggests mixing the yolk with horseradish.

1 cup yogurt + ½ cup Blueberries = Better Processing

Thanks to blueberries’ potent flavonoids, eating at least one 1/2-cup serving a week of this superfood delays mental aging by up to two and a half years, according to research.

The yogurt (look for one with less than 10 grams of sugar per serving) provides potassium, to improve blood flow, and probiotics, which promote healthy belly bacteria and protect the gut’s lining. “When this layer is damaged, chemicals can escape and cause inflammation, which the brain is very sensitive to,” says Perimutter.

1/3 Avocado + 2 whole wheat crackers = Clear cognition

High in good-for-you monounsaturated fat, avocados increase blood flow to the brain, says McDaniel. Whole grains make the perfect pair, since they supply an anti-inflammatory punch plus B vitamins, such as thiamin, which battle mental decline.

Reference: Family Circle Magazine, September 2015



Stent retrievers revolutionize treatment for severe strokes

BY American Heart Association News

Editor's note: This is one in a 10-part series of the top medical research advances as determined by American Heart Association volunteer and staff leaders.

How the most disabling strokes are treated is undergoing the biggest transformation in decades after research this year showed dramatic benefits when tiny devices are used to go into the brain and grab large clots.

People with clots blocking a large vessel in the brain are more likely to survive and fully recover if they have the clot removed by a stent retriever, studies found. Experts say qualified stroke centers nationwide are seeing an increase in referrals for stent retrievers.

"This really is the penicillin era in ischemic stroke," said Alexander Khalessi, M.D., vice chairman of neurological surgery at University of California San Diego Medical Center. Khalessi was among the first doctors in North America to perform the procedure, called mechanical thrombectomy, in patients with severe strokes.

"For patients with large-vessel blockages in the brain, these procedures reverse otherwise fatal or severely disabling strokes. The magnitude of the advance cannot be overstated," said Khalessi, who was not involved in the studies.

Each year, more than 690,000 Americans have a clot-caused, or ischemic, stroke. As many as one in four of them have a large-vessel clot, said Jeffrey Saver, M.D., who directs the University of California Los Angeles Stroke Center.

The last major advance in stroke treatment came almost 20 years ago, when the Food and Drug Administration approved the clot-dissolving drug tissue plasminogen activator, or tPA. For smaller clots, the intravenous drug is very effective, but it often fails to break up large clots.

"For these big blockages, tPA probably dissolves the clot less than a third of the time. The stent retrievers reopen the artery 80 to 90 percent of the time," said Saver, who led SWIFT PRIME, one of the five groundbreaking studies published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

The studies, which also include MR CLEAN, ESCAPE, EXTEND-IA and REVASCAT, were selected as a top 10 research advance in 2015.

Each study produced varying results, but each found that more patients in the stent retriever group were able to function normally three months later compared with patients given only tPA.

The findings convinced the American Heart Association to give the treatment its strongest recommendation in new guidelines issued in June.

Khalessi helped write the guidelines and said the discouraging reality has been that patients who survived large-vessel clots were often condemned to a life of paralysis, speech problems or other significant disability. "Our patients are actually getting back to their regular lives," he said. "That's something we couldn't offer people five years ago."

The procedure should be done within six hours after the stroke starts, and in most cases after the patient receives tPA, according to the guidelines. To remove the clot, doctors thread a catheter through an artery in the groin up to the blocked artery in the brain. The stent retriever opens and grabs the clot, allowing doctors to remove the stent with the trapped clot.

Stent retrievers are used at all 96 comprehensive stroke centers and some of the nearly 1,100 primary stroke centers certified by the AHA and the Joint Commission, a nonprofit that accredits hospitals.

The FDA has approved two stent retrievers – Solitaire, made by Minneapolis-based Medtronic, and Trevo, made by Stryker Corporation of Kalamazoo, Michigan.

Up to 20,000 stent thrombectomies are expected to be performed this year in the U.S., twice as many as last year, according to estimates from Stryker. The company expects as many as 60,000 acute stroke patients each year will ultimately receive the procedure.

At UCSD, doctors are on pace to do at least 90 stent-retrieval procedures this year, triple the number in recent years.

"We now have to rejigger our systems of care to make sure we deliver," Saver said.

That will involve counties and states redesigning their regional systems of stroke care to get patients who would benefit from stent retrievers to a hospital that can do it, he said.

But both tPA and stent retrievers are time-sensitive treatments that rely on people calling 911 as soon as they notice facial drooping, arm weakness or speech difficulty, some of the telltale warning signs of a stroke, said Ralph Sacco, M.D., chair of neurology at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine and a past AHA president.

"People having stroke symptoms – or those around them who notice there's a problem – need to understand that they could have a nearly complete recovery if they only get to the hospital fast enough," he said.

(the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics in Iowa City is the designated Iowa hospital according to the American Heart Association, Joint Commission)

Reference: www.strokeassociation.org



Stroke Club Newsletter Editor-OP Therapy

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Valentine's Day is February 14th! *I thought a little trivia might be fun to read!*

- 73% of people who buy flowers for Valentine's Day are men, while only 27 percent are women.
- Valentine's Day is big business. Consumers will spend an average of \$77.43 on Valentine's Day gifts this year. E-commerce retailers expect to rack up about \$650 million in sales of food, candy, flowers, and other Valentine's Day gifts. Of that amount about \$350 million will be for gifts and flowers and another \$45 million will be spent on food (including chocolate) and wine.
- About 1 billion Valentine's Day cards are exchanged each year. That's the largest seasonal card-sending occasion of the year, next to Christmas.
- Teachers will receive the most Valentine's Day cards, followed by children, mothers, wives, and then, sweethearts. Children ages 6 to 10 exchange more than 650 million Valentine's cards with teachers, classmates, and family members.
- In the Middle Ages, young men and women drew names from a bowl to see who their valentines would be. They would wear these names on their sleeves for one week. To wear your heart on your sleeve now means that it is easy for other people to know how you are feeling.
- In the United States, 64 percent of men do not make plans in advance for a romantic Valentine's Day with their sweethearts.
- Cupid, another symbol of Valentine's Day, became associated with it because he was the son of Venus, the Roman god of love and beauty. Cupid often appears on Valentine cards holding a bow and arrows because he is believed to use magical arrows to inspire feelings of love.
- About 3% of pet owners will give Valentine's Day gifts to their pets.
- The heart is the most common symbol of romantic love. Ancient cultures believed the human soul lived in the heart. Others thought it to be the source of emotion and intelligence. The heart may be associated with love because the ancient Greeks believed it was the target of Eros, known as Cupid to the Romans. Anyone shot in the heart by one of Cupid's arrows would fall hopelessly in love. Because the heart is so closely linked to love, its red colour is thought to be the most romantic.

Reference: <http://www.corsinet.com/braincandy/valtrivia.html>