



# HEALTH AWARENESS

## Is Your City Equipped To Handle Stroke Emergencies?

(NAPSA)—Stroke is the third leading cause of death, yet U.S. cities still struggle to effectively treat stroke patients.

Fortunately, many communities are improving rapid transport and treatment of stroke patients, but many others don't have the infrastructure, staff or equipment to quickly treat or triage stroke patients.

Time is critical when someone suffers a stroke. Today, only about five percent of stroke patients arrive at the hospital in time to be treated with a clot-busting drug that can help reduce permanent brain damage and long-term disability. This medication must be given within three hours from the onset of stroke symptoms; so it's crucial to get to a hospital prepared to quickly provide this treatment.

"Imagine the number of people who would benefit if cities had the appropriate health systems in place to treat stroke patients," says Larry B. Goldstein, M.D., F.A.H.A., chair of the American Stroke Association Advisory Committee. "We must strengthen the chain of survival in all of our cities to win the war against stroke."

Stroke is also a leading cause of serious, long-term disability. Yet only one percent of Americans worry about this health condition, according to an American Stroke Association survey conducted earlier this year.

"If we don't implement stroke treatment protocols in every community across the country, we'll continue to see an increase of stroke-related death and disability," Goldstein says.

The American Stroke Association is already seeing the benefits of a "stroke-safe city" by implementing stroke protocols in local communities through its grassroots initiative called Operation Stroke. Created in 1997, Operation Stroke is teaching people the



**A national program is underway to help make your community a "stroke-safe city."**

stroke warning signs, educating healthcare emergency staff and helping hospitals more effectively treat stroke patients. It also focuses on strengthening the chain of survival—a proven, step-by-step process that enables healthcare professionals to improve stroke care and reduce disability and death.

A community is classified as a "stroke-safe city" if it has at least the following components:

- Citizens who recognize the stroke warning signs and call 9-1-1 immediately when they appear;
- An emergency medical system able to transport patients with suspected stroke as rapidly as possible to a stroke-ready hospital;
- Access to primary stroke centers (a dedicated unit within a medical facility that has available resources, personnel and equipment and is available on immediate 24-hour notice);
- Hospital procedures to ensure that stroke patients are treated and discharged properly; and
- Access to necessary rehabilitative services.

To learn more about stroke and what you can do to protect your family, visit [www.StrokeAssociation.org](http://www.StrokeAssociation.org), or call 1-888-4-STROKE.