



HEALTH AWARENESS

Survey: Many Americans Unaware Of Stroke-Certified Hospitals

(NAPSA)—Six out of 10 Americans do not know if stroke specialty hospitals exist in their communities, according to a new American Stroke Association survey.

Yet stroke can happen to anyone at any time. Every year, 795,000 people have a stroke—that's one person every 40 seconds.

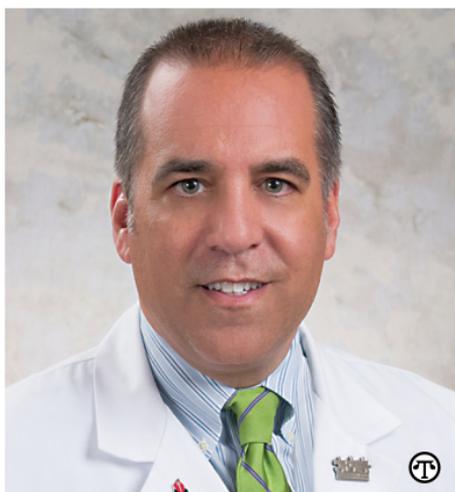
More than 80 percent of the U.S. population (250 million residents) lives within an hour's drive of a Joint Commission–certified primary stroke center or state-designated stroke center, according to the American Stroke Association. More than 68 percent (211 million residents) lives within a 30-minute drive.

However, in a survey of 1,000 people throughout the United States, 58 percent of respondents said they don't know if hospitals in their community are stroke certified—though 72 percent said they believe it's "very important" or "somewhat important" that they know where stroke-certified hospitals are located in their area.

"Everyone should know the stroke warning signs and know which hospitals are better equipped to handle strokes," said Ralph Sacco, M.D., neurologist, president-elect of the American Heart Association and chairman of neurology/professor of neurology, epidemiology and human genetics at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine. "If you experience someone having a stroke, then 9-1-1 should be called immediately for urgent attention."

Hospitals may earn certification as stroke specialty centers based on having special staffing and processes in place to handle stroke emergencies.

The amount of certified stroke centers has nearly doubled in the last five years. Today, there are more than 640 primary stroke



Dr. Sacco, M.D., president-elect of the American Heart Association.

centers certified by The Joint Commission—a private, nonprofit organization that provides certification programs for health care organizations.

A stroke occurs when the blood flow to an area of the brain is interrupted. The resulting lack of oxygen and glucose can lead to the death of brain cells and brain damage. This can result in impaired speech, movement and/or memory.

Stroke is the third leading cause of death in the United States and a leading cause of severe, long-term disability. Nearly three-quarters of all strokes occur in people over 65; however, nearly one-quarter of strokes occur in people under 65.

"If certification is not feasible for rural or other underserved area hospitals, then we will explore linking them with primary stroke centers through telemedicine to increase patient access to stroke specialists and eliminate disparities in access to acute stroke care," Sacco said.

To learn more about stroke and where to find primary stroke centers in your area, visit www.StrokeAssociation.org.