



media release

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Attn: Newsdesks
Health Correspondents

NEW GUIDELINE CALLS FOR BETTER STROKE REHAB EVIDENCE

AUTHORS CALL FOR MORE EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT REHABILITATION FOR MOST FREQUENT CAUSE OF DISABILITY IN SCOTLAND

Authors of a revised guideline on stroke management and rehabilitation have stated that the effectiveness of stroke units has led increasingly to patients who are better able to respond positively to post stroke rehabilitation.

Rehabilitation involves complex interventions that often must be tailor-made to the individual stroke patient and the authors have today (Tuesday) called for more research to be undertaken to evaluate the effectiveness of rehabilitation techniques that can aid the recovery of patients and that allow results to be compared across studies.

Improvements in the structure and presentation of the guideline have been made that should make it more accessible and clinically relevant to those working in the health service with stroke patients and their families.

Stroke is the third commonest cause of death in Scotland. Seventy thousand individuals are living with stroke and its consequences. Each year there will be approximately 12,500 new stroke events. For those who survive, the recovery of neurological impairment takes place over a variable time span. A wide range of impairments, limitations and complications can arise as a result of stroke.

The guideline from the Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (SIGN) – part of NHS Quality Improvement Scotland (NHS QIS) – is based on systematic reviews of best available evidence, and also highlights best practice based on the clinical experience of the guideline development group.

The guideline, entitled 'Management of Patients with Stroke – Rehabilitation, Prevention and Management of Complications, and Discharge Planning' aims to assist individual clinicians, primary care teams and hospital departments to optimise their management of stroke patients.

The guideline emphasises the first 12 months following a stroke and focuses on:

- general management,

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- rehabilitation,
- the prevention and management of complications
- discharge planning, and
- provision of information.

The guideline complements the following SIGN guidelines: 'Management of patients with stroke: identification and management of dysphagia' and 'Management of patients with stroke or TIA: assessment, investigation, immediate management and secondary prevention'.

Speaking of the guideline, Professor Lorraine Smith, Chair of the guideline development group and Professor of Nursing at the University of Glasgow, said: "Clearly the evidence to support various stroke rehabilitation techniques has grown and improved since our last guideline in this area in 2002, but we are disappointed that the evidence is not as strong as might be found in other clinical areas. Robust, well-planned studies are hugely important to help develop effective services and treatments that will aid stroke patients in their recovery. This guideline will be extremely useful to the health service in Scotland, but we would like those treating patients with stroke to have even greater confidence when deciding rehabilitation treatments. Only stronger and more compelling evidence will provide this."

Editors Note:

- SIGN (Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network) develops national clinical guidelines aimed at reducing variations in clinical practice and in outcomes for patients. Founded in 1993, SIGN became part of the national clinical effectiveness body, NHS Quality Improvement Scotland, on 1 January 2005.
- This guideline is an update of SIGN 64 Management of patients with stroke: rehabilitation, prevention and management of complications, and discharge planning and supersedes it. Since the publication of SIGN 64 in 2002, new evidence has been published in many areas covered by the recommendations in that guideline resulting in the need for this selective update.
- A TIA, or transient ischaemic attack, is a mini-stroke where symptoms last less than 24 hours.
- NHS QIS is a Special Health Board that provides support to NHSScotland. We translate the latest scientific research, expert opinion and patient experience to help improve the quality of healthcare in Scotland. Key components of our organisation are: The Healthcare Environment Inspectorate, Scottish Health Council, and the Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines network (SIGN). We also take a lead role in co-ordinating the work of the Scottish Patient Safety Programme and provide support to the Scottish Medicines Consortium.
- The SIGN guideline is available from www.sign.ac.uk.

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