



May 14th, 2014

Don't ignore stroke symptoms

In Action on Stroke Month, health staff at South Tyneside District Hospital are urging people not to dismiss warning signs of stroke as 'just a funny turn'.

On Thursday, May 22nd, between 11am - 3pm, there will be two stalls at South Tyneside District Hospital - one in Alexander's Restaurant and the other near the main entrance – where staff will provide health and lifestyle advice and blood pressure checks.

Each year, at least 46,000 people in the UK have a mini-stroke - also known as a TIA or Transient Ischaemic Attack - for the first time, of which around 500 occur in South Tyneside, which is nearly double the national average.

The Stroke Association has issued a report, 'Not just a funny turn', as part of a campaign to raise awareness of the impact of TIAs and encourage people to call 999 for anyone showing symptoms. The report is based on a survey of 670 people who had experienced a TIA within the last five years. Research suggests that approximately 10,000 strokes could be prevented every year in the UK if all TIAs and minor strokes were treated urgently but over a third of those surveyed said they had put the symptoms down to a 'funny turn'.

Dr Jon Scott, Consultant Physician for Stroke Services at South Tyneside District Hospital, said: "A TIA is a warning sign that a person may be at a high risk of a stroke. That risk is greatest in the first few days, with one in 12 people who have a TIA going on to suffer a full-blown stroke within a week. The symptoms can pass very quickly and are often mistaken for tiredness or other conditions, such as migraine.

"Every second counts when it comes to successfully treating a patient with a suspected stroke and improving their chances of a full recovery: a delay in getting help can result in death or long-term disabilities. Urgent investigation and treatment for some people who have a TIA could reduce their risk of having another stroke by 80 per cent. Rapid access (within 24 hours, seven days a week) to specialist assessment, investigation and treatment is still important even if the symptoms have stopped as it can reduce the risk of someone having another TIA or a disabling stroke."

Dr Scott added: "We are constantly amazed at what our patients achieve through their sheer courage and determination but to have a fighting chance of living a near normal life, it is absolutely vital that, at the first symptom of a stroke, they call 999."



The multi-disciplinary Stroke Unit team at South Tyneside District Hospital, led by Dr Scott, includes nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, social workers and a clinical psychologist. The borough's stroke and TIA patients are able to receive fast access to expert assessment as a result of a collaborative Consultant rota between South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust, Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust and City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust, which was introduced in 2011. The rota ensures that a specialist stroke consultant is on call at all times, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Through 'telehealth' technology, consultants can log on to their computer at work or at home to both see and talk to patients through a video link to the bedside. This, along with access to the patient's scan results, allows a rapid decision on the best treatment for them.

The **FAST** test can help you to recognize the symptoms of a stroke or TIA. Look out for:

FACIAL weakness: Can the person smile? Has their mouth or eye drooped?

ARM weakness: Can the person raise both arms?

SPEECH problems: Can the person speak clearly and understand what you say?

TIME to call 999. If you see any one of these signs, seek immediate medical attention

The symptoms of a stroke or TIA usually come on suddenly. Others that are sometimes associated with TIA can include:

- Weakness or numbness on one side of your body
- Loss of vision or blurred vision in one or both eyes
- Memory loss or confusion
- Dizziness, unsteadiness or a sudden fall, especially with any of the other symptoms

ends

Pictured above: The picture shows members of South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust's Community Stroke Team.

Issued on behalf of South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust by Kay Jordan

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