

New York

Stroke Awareness Campaign

Public Health Problem

Community awareness of stroke signs and symptoms is essential to reducing the time between onset of stroke and treatment. The New York Healthy Hearts Program (NYHHP) implemented a stroke awareness campaign in the Capital Region of the state. Staff conducted focus groups which showed that awareness of stroke symptoms was relatively high but that awareness of the need to receive treatment within 3 hours was low. Other barriers to seeking care immediately included the cost of an ambulance if the symptoms turned out not to be stroke-related.

Program Example

On the basis of the focus group findings and guidance from the Capital Region Stroke Task Force, NYHHP began a multi-media awareness campaign. This campaign was designed to describe stroke symptoms using the FAST acronym (i.e. face, arms, speech, and time), urge people to call 9-1-1 within 1 hour of the appearance of symptoms, and inform people that stroke symptoms are often not painful but can still be serious. Program staff purchased media time on television and radio and placed advertisements on buses and in bus shelters. Six area hospitals contributed to the cost of running the advertisements. Members of a Stroke Task Force made numerous community presentations.

Implications and Impact

Results from a pre- and post-campaign evaluation in the Capital Region compared to another region that did not receive the stroke messages found that the Capital Region had a significantly greater increase in the percentage of people who said they had seen television advertisements about stroke (80 % vs. 55%) and in the percentage of people who correctly responded that they would call 9-1-1 if they or someone they knew was experiencing stroke symptoms. For instance, after the campaign, the percent in the Capital Region who would call 9-1-1 for arm weakness in themselves was 40% vs. 28% in the control community. To determine whether the campaign affected behavior, the NYHHP is collecting data from one of six area hospitals to determine the time it takes for patients to arrive at the hospital from the onset of their symptoms. Preliminary results from Get with the Guidelines data in the Capital Region found a statistically significant increase in the percentage of stroke patients arriving by ambulance (56% at follow up vs. 48% at baseline). Data on changes in the percentage of stroke patients arriving within two hours of the onset of symptoms is still being collected and analyzed.