

Stroke Care Clinical Network news

September 2008

Welcome

Welcome to this inaugural newsletter for the Department of Human Services, Victorian Stroke Clinical Network (VSCN). All facets of the project are progressing well and rapidly due to the efforts of a very active and hard working committee.

Victorian Stroke Clinical Network (VSCN)

In September last year the Department of Human Services launched the *Stroke Care Strategy for Victoria* (the strategy).

The strategy makes 28 recommendations to improve the delivery of public acute and sub-acute stroke services in Victoria over the next five to 10 years in support of an integrated state-wide approach to care of people within stroke. The government has committed \$5 million over three years to implement the recommendations. The strategy is available on the Department of Human Services website:

www.health.vic.gov.au/clinicalnetworks

Implementation of these recommendations is being overseen by the 'Victorian Stroke Clinical Network Committee' (VSCN Committee). The committee is chaired by Professor Chris Bladin, Director of Neurosciences at Box Hill Hospital and membership comprises of clinical, senior health service management and organisational representatives (the full list of VSCN members is at the end of this newsletter).

The VSCN currently meets monthly and has established (or is in the process of establishing) sub-committees to help address specific issues.

The following sub-committees have already convened:

- Data
- Subacute project.

Sub-committees being established include:

- Resources
- Medical education
- TIA management
- Consumer working party
- Nursing and allied health education.

Future editions of this newsletter will feature the work of these sub-committees.

A number of key activities to report from the past few months include:

Stroke clinical facilitators

One of the major achievements to date is the appointment of Stroke clinical facilitators across the state (Rec. 27). The facilitators, under the management of a team coordinator and the VSCN Project Manager, will be based in their relevant catchment area and be responsible for local implementation of the recommendations of the strategy. These roles are pivotal in the success of the implementation and we can look forward to updates from each site.

This team includes a collective 40 years of stroke nursing experience as well as highly skilled allied health representation.

Current work is focused on local gap analysis and identification of priorities in consultation with stakeholders.

VSCN Stroke Facilitators



The appointments include:

Rear row (left to right)

Linda Frances Northern Health

Marlena Klaic Peninsula Health

Adele Mollo Western Health (team coordinator)

Leanne Muns Bendigo (shared position)

Dr Belinda Bilney Grampians (Ballarat)

Front row (left to right)

Sharan Ermel Bendigo (shared position)

Ann Briggs Latrobe Regional

Patrick Groot Warnambool

Stroke care scholarship

Recommendation 26 of the strategy identifies the need for an adequate supply of appropriately qualified medical, nursing and allied health clinicians to provide optimal stroke care.

A first step in providing Victorian clinicians with training opportunities is via scholarships to attend the **2008 Smart Stroke Conference** in Sydney.

In May nursing and allied health clinicians were invited to apply for one of 12 \$1,000 scholarships to attend this conference in August.

An overwhelming number of quality applications were received and, as a result, the budget was expanded and 20 scholarships were awarded to a mix of nursing and allied health professionals from across the state.

Recipients include:

Scholarship recipients	Health service affiliation	Discipline
Nicole Aitken	Bendigo Health	SALT
Donna Barlow	Dandenong Hosp.	Physio
Samone Bell	Sth-West Healthcare	Nurse
Melissa Bergman	Melbourne Health	Nurse
Catherine Chibnall	Ballarat Health	OT
Stuart Clarke	LRH	Nurse
Abby Friedman	Penninsula Health	SALT
Jennifer Gapper	The Alfred	Nurse
Johanna Madden	Goulburn Valley Health	Physio
Lucinda Marr	Melbourne Health	Physio
David Meade	Dandenong Hosp.	SALT
Kevin Mulrain	Peter James Centre	Physio
Gail Pedrola	Penninsula Health	OT
Tara Purvis	Austin Health	Physio
Grant Scroggie	Kingston Centre	Physio
Kellie Sharrock	Ballarat Health	SALT
Bridget Sloane	Western Health	OT
Susan Smith	West Gippsland	Nurse
Rachel Taylor	Wimmera Healthcare	Nurse
Gracie Tolomo	Melbourne Health	SALT

The conference was held on August 13-15 and those who received scholarships will share their learning's locally with colleagues.

Post conference evaluation indicates this was a very positive learning experience for the scholarship recipients. Other benefits included, professional networking opportunities and stimulation of ideas and enthusiasm for implementing improvements in stroke care in their workplaces.

Other seminars and training opportunities are also being explored to ensure that education opportunities are maximised.

Post graduate scholarships

Work is progressing on a post graduate scholarship program targeting allied health and nursing staff. As details become available, they will be posted on the Stroke Clinical Network website.

Stroke nurse practitioners

Nurse practitioners are registered nurses with advanced educational experience who are authorised to practice in an expanded nursing role. They can work in a diverse range of clinical areas - from acute hospitals to aged care and community settings. In addition to further education and advanced clinical practice, nurse practitioners have developed the skills and knowledge to expand their role to include aspects of care that may have traditionally been performed by other health professionals such as prescribing medicines and ordering and interpreting investigations and tests.

Through a tender/application process (via the Department of Human Services Nurse Policy Branch) a number of public health services have received funding for Stroke Care under the Victorian Nurse Practitioner Project. Successful health services were advised in May and the following sites have now commenced work on this important initiative:

- Austin Health
- Bayside Health
- Eastern Health
- Melbourne Health
- Northern Health
- St Vincent's Hospital
- Western Health
- Peninsula Health.

Nurse practitioner roles may differ in different health settings, however the aim is to ensure timely access to expert management and care for stroke patients, leading to better health outcomes. The VSCN is looking at ways to support this initiative.

Australian Stroke Coalition

The Stroke Society of Australasia and the National Stroke Foundation are participating in a new initiative, the Australian Stroke Coalition (ASC). A number of different networks and organisations are currently involved in activities to improve stroke care in Australia however these groups are neither clearly nor strategically linked.

The coalition brings together representatives from groups and organisations working in the stroke field, such as clinical networks and professional associations/colleges. The ASC will work together to tackle agreed priorities to improve stroke care, reduce duplication amongst groups and strengthen the voice for stroke care at a national and state level.

The initial aims of the ASC are:

- To develop a set of priorities for stroke care based on gaps identified in the Stroke Foundation national audit.
- To determine a coordinated strategy to improve these priority areas.
- To support communication between key organisations and their members regarding stroke care in Australia.
- To link ongoing and new initiatives at a state and national level.

Representing the VSCN is Dr Debbie Kesper as the clinical representative and the program manager.

National Stroke Week 15-21 September



Professor Chris Bladin with Kim Durose and her husband Matt

2008 Stroke Week has just finished and health services are using this as an opportunity to highlight their stroke services and raise the profile of stroke and its risk factors in their local community. Once again the VSCN has provided the National Stroke Foundation (NSF) with \$300,000 to augment its mass media 'FAST' campaign in Victoria to enhance public awareness of the signs and symptoms of stroke, and emphasize the message that stroke is a medical emergency.

The Minister for Health launched Victoria's Stroke Week on 16 September 2008 at the invitation of the Stroke Foundation.



Health Minister Daniel Andrews promoting the dial 000 message

'FAST' educates people to identify the signs of stroke and the need for *FAST* action.

If you recognise the signs of **STROKE** act

F **Facial weakness**
Can the person smile?
Has their mouth or eye drooped?

A **Arm weakness**
Can the person raise both arms?

S **Speech difficulty**
Can the person speak clearly
and understand what you say?

T **Time to act fast**
If you recognise the signs
of stroke, call 000 immediately.

Call 000

The signs of stroke are:

- Weakness, numbness or paralysis of the face, arm or leg
- Difficulty speaking or understanding
- Dizziness and loss of balance
- Loss of vision
- Headache, usually severe and abrupt
- Difficulty swallowing

Act FAST

If you experience the signs of stroke or recognise them in someone else, call 000 immediately. Fast action can prevent further damage to the brain and help someone make a full recovery.



For more information call 1800 787 653 or visit www.strokefoundation.com.au.

The National Stroke Foundation acknowledges the support from our valued partners including Southern Cross Broadcasting, Corcoran and News Limited and we thank them.

Similar funding was provided to the NSF in 2007 and resulted in Victorians having greater exposure to the television, radio and print media campaign than other states. The Victorian public received up to six times more exposure to the FAST campaign than NSW residents, and over five million Victorians were reached, in some form by this important public health message. Evaluation of the 2007 campaign demonstrated that the Victorian public were more able to correctly identify the signs of stroke, and correctly name two symptoms of stroke than the national average. Eighty-nine percent of Victorians surveyed correctly responded they would call 000 if a stroke was suspected.

Team changes

The committee welcomes Kathryn Whitfield as the new Stroke Clinical Network Project Manager. Kathryn has a wealth of experience in clinical networks and project management and has left sunny Queensland to join the VSCN in Victoria. Kathryn's contact details are:

e - Kathryn.Whitfield@dhs.vic.gov.au

p - (03) 9096 1297.

Farewell

Many have had the pleasure of meeting Sonia Denisenko, Project Manager of the Stroke Clinical Network. Sonia commenced maternity leave in August and will return to the project at a later date on a part-time basis. Sonia and her husband are proud parents of a baby boy and we wish them all the very best.

Future updates

This is the first in a series of information updates which we intend to produce on a quarterly basis (many thanks to Sally Duff for her authorship of the majority of this first edition).

The Department of Human Services is currently establishing an e-mailing list of clinicians and other stakeholders interested in receiving information on VSCN activities. If you wish to be included on this e-mailing list please forward your details to clinical.networks@dhs.vic.gov.au or advise your local facilitator.

VSCN membership

Victorian Stroke Clinical Network members	Affiliation
Prof. Chris Bladin	Box Hill Hospital
Dr Wendy Bissinger	GP representative
Dr Kim Brock	St Vincent's Hospital
Mrs Sally Daff	Consumer representative
Assoc. Prof. Helen Dewey / Louise James (Aug 08-Jan 09)	Austin Health
Assoc. Prof. Richard Gerraty	The Alfred
Mr Patrick Groot	Southwest Health Care (Warrnambool)
Ms Sharon Hakkennes	Barwon Health Network
Assoc. Prof. Peter Hand	Melbourne Health (RMH)
Dr Genevieve Kennedy	St Vincent's Hospital/ Eastern Health
Dr Debbie Kesper	Rural physician
Ms Alison Lunt	Peninsula Health
Ms Kate MacRae	Southern Health
Mr Chris Price	National Stroke Foundation
Mr David Ramsay	Monash Medical Centre
Ms Jenny Walsh	Western Health
Dr Alistair Wright	Warragul Hospital
Ex officio member	Affiliation
Dr Mark Mackay	Royal Children's Hospital

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