

NEWS RELEASE



For Immediate Release

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STROKE ... STROKE ... STROKE

AWARENESS CAMPAIGN BEGINS

Victoria - The Heart and Stroke Foundation of BC & Yukon launched a warning signs of stroke public awareness campaign today.

"Time is brain when it comes to stroke and it's critical to get medical attention as quickly as possible," said Bobbe Wood, President & CEO of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of BC & Yukon. "There are five warning signs of a stroke, but in a survey done in 2007, only half of British Columbians could name even two of them. In 2008, a national poll showed that fewer than half of Canadians would call 9-1-1 in the event of a stroke. This campaign is designed to turn those numbers around and help British Columbians understand that the faster they receive treatment, the better their chance of a full recovery from stroke."

The 30-second ad features a rowing scull racing across Elk Lake (near Victoria) as the coxswain shouts "stroke" after each of the five symptoms is identified. The five symptoms of stroke are sudden weakness or numbness, sudden trouble speaking, sudden vision problems, sudden severe and unusual headache, and sudden dizziness or loss of balance.

"Approximately 7,700 British Columbians experience a stroke each year for the first time, which is the third leading cause of death in the province," said Ida Chong, Minister of Healthy Living and Sport. "Reducing high blood pressure by maintaining a healthy lifestyle can dramatically reduce our risk of stroke, and through the Heart and Stroke Foundation's stroke awareness campaign, we can also educate ourselves about the signs and symptoms that signal a stroke."

The Heart and Stroke Foundation of BC & Yukon contributed \$300,000 for the campaign. Five leading pharmaceutical companies (AstraZeneca, Pfizer Canada, Boehringer Ingelheim, Merck Frosst, and Sanofi-aventis Canada) contributed \$50,000 each to the campaign. The ad runs on A-Channel, CBC, CHEK TV, CKVU/Omni, CTV, Global and Joy TV. All stations are donating additional airtime to the campaign.

Research shows that TV commercials are very effective in increasing awareness of the signs and symptoms of stroke. In 2003/04, half of Ontario residents could name two or more of the five warning signs of stroke. After an ad campaign, that number jumped to 68.5 per cent. In the U.K., the number of people who could recognize one or more symptoms rose from a baseline of 10-20 per cent to a high of 50 per cent after a campaign.

The campaign will also raise public awareness with print and radio ads; a dedicated website (www.signsofstroke.ca); posters and wallet cards; and partnerships with community organizations, pharmacies, BC Ambulance, firefighters, health authorities and the Health Check program (www.healthcheck.org). The Heart and Stroke Foundation of BC & Yukon will monitor public awareness before and after its campaign to measure the increase in British Columbians' recognition of stroke signs and symptoms.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation of BC & Yukon oversees the BC Stroke Strategy, a comprehensive plan that aims to improve stroke awareness, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation across British Columbia. The Strategy has received \$4 million from the B.C. Government to develop, implement and expand projects such as Telestroke, Rapid TIA Assessment Clinics, emergency stroke care and community-based rehabilitation. For more information, visit www.bcstrokestrategy.ca

The Heart and Stroke Foundation of BC & Yukon, a volunteer-based health charity, leads in eliminating heart disease and stroke and reducing their impact through the advancement of research and its application, the promotion of healthy living, and advocacy.

Backgrounder attached

For more information about the Heart and Stroke Foundation of BC & Yukon's stroke public awareness campaign, including the ad, please visit www.signsofstroke.ca

For resources about preventing stroke, or living with the after effects of a stroke, visit www.heartandstroke.bc.ca

For information about the BC Stroke Strategy, visit www.bcstrokestrategy.ca

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