



Advocacy Newsletter

February 2010

Welcome to the inaugural e-newsletter to keep BC policy makers up to date on key Heart and Stroke Foundation of BC & Yukon advocacy initiatives. We are leading and participating in many projects and want to offer a quick and easy way to keep you up to date on progress, partnerships, milestones and achievements. We hope you enjoy this newsletter and find it useful.

At the Legislature



November 3rd 2009 was a busy day for the [Heart and Stroke Foundation of BC & Yukon](#). It started with our third annual Breakfast with MLAs, and we were very happy that more than half were able to find time in the busy day to join us.

It was a great chance to meet face-to-face and explain, especially to newly elected MLAs, the work that we do on behalf of all British Columbians. If you missed it, please visit www.heartandstroke.bc.ca/awarenessevents. If you were able to attend, or want to check out our photos for your own newsletter use, please visit [our flickr page](#).

Along with a well-received heart-smart breakfast, we provided updates on some of our top priorities: the [BC Stroke Strategy](#) and the need and opportunity to address [heart and stroke issues particularly among women](#).

Produce Availability Initiative

Right after breakfast, we headed to the Legislature to participate in the announcement of the Produce Availability Initiative, which will provide British Columbians living in remote communities with improved access to fresh vegetables and fruits.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation of BC & Yukon is one of several partners managing this one-year initiative, providing advice to the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands and Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport about creating long-term efficiencies within the food distribution system to remote communities.

"It takes a collaborative effort from governments, food suppliers and producers to ensure that rural and remote communities have fresh produce available," said Bobbe Wood, president and CEO of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of BC & Yukon. "Evidence shows

vegetables and fruit have a protective effect against the development of chronic disease and that even a one-serving per day increase is linked to a 20 per cent reduction in all causes of mortality."

To view the full news release, [click here](#). For information about inconsistencies in the price and accessibility of healthy food across Canada, [click here](#).

Wellness Fair

As soon as the news conference in the Rotunda was over, we went to the Hemlock Room, where a Heart and Stroke Wellness Fair was in full swing. Working with the [Victorian Order of Nurses](#), we put 54 MLAs and Legislature staff through a risk assessment – checking cholesterol, blood sugars, weight, blood pressure and waist size. It was a chance to reinforce our main message of the day: Your health is important to you and to us.



To help you stay on top of your own health plan, we updated our [You can Do It – A Mini Guide to Keeping Fit, Staying Healthy While Leading a Busy Life in the Legislature](#). Download the guide and pass it along to someone in the office who could use a little support and encouragement.

BC Stroke Strategy

The BC Stroke Strategy (www.bcstrokestrategy.ca) is an ambitious undertaking that, if fully implemented, would:

- help British Columbians prevent and reduce their risk of having a stroke,
- give health care providers more information, tools and support to diagnose, treat and reduce the impact of stroke,
- improve treatment for patients who have had a stroke, and
- develop comprehensive rehabilitation and community reintegration programs for people recovering from stroke.

For an update on the Strategy, download our [Winter Newsletter](#). Telestroke, TIA Rapid Assessment Clinics and a Stroke Registry are among the projects being implemented.

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Telestroke

In the past two years, we have brought Telestroke to British Columbia, making it possible for a neurologist to examine a stroke patient in another hospital, review diagnostic test results and determine what treatment would work best. We piloted the first Telestroke project with the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA), and since June 2009, 18 patients in Duncan and Nanaimo were assessed by a neurologist in Victoria. This happened within the critical 4.5-hour window to administer tPA. Eight patients received this clot-busting drug without the risk, stress and cost of being moved to Victoria. Telestroke will soon be launched in the Fraser Health and Vancouver Coastal Health Authorities. This will allow physicians working in different health authorities to consult over a stroke patient, while developing a model that can be introduced to hospitals across BC. For a more detailed update on the Telestroke prototypes, please see the [Telestroke Update](#).

TIA Rapid Assessment Clinics

Approximately 20 per cent of Transient Ischemic Attacks (TIAs, or mini-strokes) go on to become a full-blown stroke within a year. TIA Rapid Assessment Clinics can reduce this by as much as 80 per cent by fast-tracking patients who may have had a mini-stroke through diagnostic and assessment tests. They also play a key role in teaching patients how to reduce their risk of having a full-blown and debilitating stroke.

With funding from the BC Stroke Strategy, Vancouver Coastal Health expanded hours of existing clinics at Vancouver General Hospital and opened a new clinic at St. Paul's Hospital. Vancouver Island Health Authority expanded hours at Victoria General and opened a new clinic in Campbell River. As a result, patient volumes in the VIHA clinics have increased by 40 per cent, from 1,200 patients per year to over 1,600.

Since opening in February 2009, Fraser Health's TIA Rapid Assessment Clinics in Abbotsford, Surrey and New Westminster have seen more than 1,200 patients. Interior Health opened new clinics in Kamloops and Cranbrook in 2009.

The Northern Health Authority is looking at improving the way TIA cases are identified and referred for rapid follow-up, as well as expediting diagnostic tests.

In late November 2009, we were pleased to join Fraser Health in showing the Minister of Health Services, The Honourable Kevin Falcon, around the TIA Rapid Assessment Clinic at Royal Columbian Hospital.



From left to right: Minister Falcon, Regional Stroke Coordinator Kevin Harrison, Neurologist Dr. Kenneth Ho and Stroke Nurse Rochelle Caratao.

Stroke Registry

A key element of the BC Stroke Strategy is a world class provincial Stroke Registry. We worked closely with the Ministry of Health Services, and by linking several health databases together, we can now pull comprehensive and detailed information about stroke and TIA provincially and regionally. We have also identified [five key indicators](#) to measure the performance of stroke care in British Columbia.

Women and Stroke

While the gap between the number of men and women who die from heart disease is almost equal, 18 per cent more women die from stroke than men. The problem is that most women still think of stroke as a "man's" disease. Only 13 per cent of women recognize that heart disease and stroke are the biggest threat to their health – even bigger than cancer.

In February 2008, we launched the Heart Truth in Canada campaign to raise awareness about this issue and help women reduce their risk. For more information, please visit www.thehearttruth.ca/

Position Statements

Through 2010, we will focus on the rising public health epidemic of obesity, recognizing the toll it takes on individual health and the impact it has on our health care system. We will continue to work hard on issues around tobacco control, stroke prevention, the built environment and health inequities. These broad, social factors have an undeniable effect on the heart health of whole communities of people. From poverty and race to education and access to health care and housing, many of the key determinants of heart health are manageable – but not by individuals.

[Click here](#) for our position statements on these public health issues.

Upcoming events



Hypertension is the number one risk factor for stroke and a major risk factor for heart disease. Yet 43 per cent of Canadians with high blood pressure don't even know they have it because there are no symptoms. Every year, the Heart and Stroke Foundation of BC & Yukon raises public awareness by hosting an event at the Legislature with MLAs. This year, we'll host our popular Big Bike fundraising event during the first week of June. We'd like to thank MLAs, especially former MLA Arnie Hamilton (above, third from the right) who joined us in a ride around the Legislature.

Thank you

Thank you for your continued support and interest in the Heart and Stroke Foundation of BC & Yukon. If you'd like more information about the projects in this update, please visit the advocacy section of the Heart and Stroke website www.heartandstroke.bc.ca/advocacy, send me an email or give me a call.

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