

US women unfamiliar with most stroke warning signs

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Many U.S. women don't know most of the warning signs of a stroke, according to research presented at the American Heart Association's Epidemiology and Prevention/Nutrition, Physical Activity and Metabolism 2014 Scientific Sessions.

The study is also published in the American Heart Association journal, *Stroke*.

In a phone survey of 1,205 U.S. [women](#):

- More than half (51 percent) of the women identified sudden weakness or numbness on one side of the face, arms or legs as a warning sign of a [stroke](#).
- Less than half (44 percent) identified difficulty speaking or garbled speech as a warning sign. Less than a fourth identified other signs of a stroke, including:
 - sudden severe headache (23 percent);
 - unexplained dizziness (20 percent); and
 - sudden vision loss (18 percent).

Hispanic women were less likely than others to know most of the warning signs of a stroke – 25 percent did not know any, compared to 18 percent for whites and 19 percent for blacks. .

Despite not knowing the [warning signs](#), 84 percent of the women knew the importance of calling 9-1-1 if they thought they were having a

stroke.

"This lack of recognition of stroke signs and symptoms could be a significant barrier to reducing death and disability related to stroke in the United States," said Lori Mosca, M.D., M.P.H., Ph.D., principal investigator of the study. "This is critically important because delays in getting care costs lives and hinders functional recovery."

Stroke affects more women than men, is the fourth-leading overall cause of death in the United States—the third leading cause of death for women—and is a primary cause of long-term disability among survivors. The risk is greatest among minority racial groups, including blacks and Hispanics.

The American Heart Association/American Stroke Association conducted the survey in 2012 as part of a study of heart and stroke awareness among women. Respondents were English-speaking women in the United States, 25 years or older at the time of the study. More than half were white, 17 percent were black, 17 percent were Hispanic and 12 percent were other races/ethnicities.

The association's national campaign to increase stroke awareness urges people to spot and respond to stroke with the acronym F.A.S.T.

- Face drooping.
- Arm weakness.
- Speech difficulty.
- Time to call 9-1-1.

"It's so important to recognize a stroke and get quick treatment," said Mosca, a professor of medicine and director of Preventive Cardiology at New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Columbia University Medical Center in New York. "Public awareness campaigns such as F.A.S.T., along with

education from healthcare providers, can help raise that awareness."

Provided by American Heart Association

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