

A prescription for better stroke care

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Stroke patients are 70 per cent more likely to continue taking their stroke prevention medications one year later if they have a prescription in hand when discharged – according to researchers at St. Michael's Hospital and the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences (ICES).

Using data from 11 [stroke](#) centres, researchers determined how many Ontarians were taking their medications one week, one year and two years after having a stroke. The results reveal the importance of simple interventions, such as giving a prescription to a patient before discharge, to increase short- and long-term stroke prevention.

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According to the Heart and Stroke Foundation, there are an estimated 50,000 strokes in Canada each year. After having a stroke or [minor stroke](#), the risk of having another stroke is greater. The risk of recurrence, however, can be reduced by more than 80 per cent by following [stroke prevention](#) strategies such as rehabilitation and taking medications.

Dr. Saposnik said that at the time of discharge most patients are more focused on the tangible issues of their recovery, such as: "What will happen at rehab?" or "What will happen when I go home?"

"Patients have other things on their minds after a stroke and it's up to us to give them the tools they need to thrive," said Dr. Saposnik, who is also an adjunct scientist at ICES.

The two types of drugs most commonly prescribed after a stroke are antihypertensives (to lower blood pressure) and statins (to lower blood cholesterol). Patients may be prescribed one of these drugs or both. Patients may remain on these drugs for the rest of their lives to prevent another stroke. About 315,000 Canadians are living with the effects of stroke.

Stroke patients who had been given a prescription before discharge were 70 per cent more likely than other patients to still be taking both antihypertensives and statins one year later and 40 per cent more likely after two years.

There are several reasons why a patient might be discharged before receiving a prescription. Doctors may assume their patient will receive a prescription from a family doctor, whom patients are supposed to see within seven days of discharge. Another reason some patients leave without a prescription is that the prescription might be dictated in the chart but not actually delivered to patients.

This study is published in *The Journal of Stroke and Cerebrovascular Disease*.

Provided by St. Michael's Hospital

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