

Stroke falls to No. 5 cause of death in US

January 5 2015, by Carrie Thacker

Stroke has dropped from the nation's fourth-leading cause of death to No. 5, according to new federal statistics. It is the second time since 2011 that stroke has dropped a spot in the mortality rankings.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report released Tuesday, [stroke](#) swapped positions with unintentional injuries, which killed 1,579 more people than stroke in 2013.

"The fact that the [death rate](#) is declining from this terrible and devastating disease is gratifying news," said American Heart Association president Elliott Antman, M.D. "These statistics are a tribute to the many courageous survivors, healthcare professionals, researchers, volunteers and everyone else committed to fighting stroke.

"Still, far too many people are still dying from stroke, and too many people are suffering greatly from this disease," said Antman, a professor of medicine and Associate Dean for Clinical/Translational Research at Harvard Medical School and a senior physician in the Cardiovascular Division of the Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston.

The stroke death rate dropped slightly, from 36.9 percent in 2012 to 36.2 percent in 2013. While the death rate from heart disease dropped somewhat between 2012 and 2013, it remains the No. 1 cause of death in the nation. Cancer is the second-leading cause of death, followed by chronic lower respiratory diseases.

The decline in stroke deaths may be due in part to improvements in

treatment and prevention, said Ralph Sacco, M.D., past president of the American Heart Association and chairman of neurology at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine.

"There are more [stroke centers](#) now operating in the U.S., and the acute care of stroke is improving," said Sacco, who in 2010 became the first neurologist to be named American Heart Association president.

"However, although mortality from stroke is dropping, we know that the number of people having strokes in the U.S. is rising each year due to the aging of our population and other signs that strokes have increased in younger groups."

Indeed, despite the lower death rate, 432 more people died from stroke in 2013 than in 2012, the report found.

Stroke also remains a leading cause of disability in the U.S. In fact, the number of people having strokes – often with painful and debilitating after-effects – remains a major cause of concern. "Stroke is more disabling than it is fatal," said Sacco.

And that's why the American Heart Association remains committed to working with survivors, CEO Nancy Brown said.

"There is a great deal to be done on behalf of [stroke survivors](#), who very often face highly debilitating consequences in the aftermath of this severe cardiovascular event," she said. "We are committed to standing by their side as we continue striving for new breakthroughs in [stroke prevention](#), treatment and rehabilitation."

More information: NCHS Data Brief: Mortality in the United States, 2013: www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db178.htm

Provided by American Heart Association

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