

Stroke patients unable to identify doctor are more apt to misunderstand medications, care plan

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Hospitalized stroke patients are far more likely than general neurology or neurosurgery patients to be unable to identify their attending physician, a knowledge gap that leads to greater odds of also misunderstanding their medication needs and care plan, according to illuminating new research by Northwell Health neurologists.

The study, performed on a neuroscience ward, suggests that stroke patients may need more robust communication and education—or a different approach- than other neurology patients.

The research, co-authored by Jeffrey M. Katz, M.D., chief of Neurovascular Services and director of the Stroke Center at North Shore University Hospital, and Paul Wright, M.D., chair of Neurology at North Shore University Hospital and Long Island Jewish Medical Center, both members of Northwell Health, will be presented at the International Stroke Conference in Los Angeles, being held from Feb. 17-19, 2016. In addition to Dr. Katz and Dr. Wright, other authors of the study included medical student Fred Cohen and Jackie McCarthy, MS.

"These findings tell us we need to be more vigilant about identifying ourselves as physicians and informing stroke patients about their medications and care plan," Dr. Katz explained. "Patients who do not know their medications well show an increased risk for subsequent strokes, and dissatisfaction with their care. This is, in essence, a patient

satisfaction study telling us what we can do to increase patient satisfaction and compliance."

Dr. Wright added: "In the past, you'd have one doctor come into your hospital room and that would be your physician. But over the years we've started developing specialties and subspecialties, and now there are 10 or 15 physicians who show up. The key point is we as healthcare professionals have to inform the patient who's in charge of their care."

Drs. Katz and Wright and their team administered a five-question survey to a total of 146 patients, including 55 stroke patients, 91 general neurology and neurosurgery (non-stroke) patients, or their representatives. Sixty percent of stroke patients were unable to properly identify their primary attending physician, compared to 38.5 percent of non-stroke patients.

Of the total patients who couldn't identify their doctors, nearly 70 percent of stroke patients also lacked knowledge of their medication and care plan, compared with 40 percent of non-[stroke patients](#).

Dr. Katz suggested that pharmacists also get more involved in educating patients about their medications, making adherence to prescribed drugs even more likely. "It's everyone's job to teach patients," he said.

Dr. Wright emphasized that communicating clearly is an important skill for healthcare professionals.

"Just because we do certain things every single day doesn't mean they're second nature to the patients or staff members around us," he said.

"Being more mindful of that will help [patient satisfaction](#) and medication compliance, which is what we want for all our patients."

Provided by Northwell Health

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