

Almost half of stroke survivors suffer fatigue, study reveals

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Credit: University of Nottingham

Almost half of people who experience a stroke suffer from fatigue in the early days of their recovery, a landmark new study has found.

Although [stroke survivors](#) have reported [fatigue](#) as a problem, previous estimates of the numbers of people affected have varied greatly – from one-quarter to almost three-quarters of stroke survivors.

Now, for the first time, a more accurate picture of the problem is being published in the journal *Clinical Rehabilitation*, thanks to The Nottingham Fatigue after Stroke (NotFAST) study, led by experts at The University of Nottingham.

The study, funded by the Stroke Association, is the first to specifically exclude patients with depression, which is strongly linked to fatigue, and which may have influenced the outcome of previous studies that

included people with [depressive symptoms](#).

Avril Drummond, Professor of Healthcare Research and Director of Research in the University's School of Health Sciences, led the study.

She said: "Fatigue is not feeling tired; the terms are not the same. Fatigue is an overwhelming feeling of exhaustion which doesn't improve with sleep or rest and which isn't related to activity.

"Fatigue is a major problem for stroke survivors and effects all aspects of their lives. It can be a key factor in reducing participation in rehabilitation after stroke, and this can have a real impact on recovery. People simply do not reach their fullest potential."

The study recruited patients within four weeks of experiencing a stroke from four UK inpatient stroke services at Nottingham University Hospitals, University Hospitals of Leicester, University College London Hospitals and Salford Royal Hospitals over an 18- month period. The study excluded patients with dysphasia, dementia and depressive symptoms.

The participants were assessed for: self-reported fatigue; mobility and activities of daily living; sleep; mood and emotional factors; and cognitive abilities.

The patients were followed up between four and six weeks after their stroke and the study found that 43 per cent of participants reported experiencing fatigue – for a large proportion of them (62 per cent) this was a new, post-stroke symptom.

Professor Drummond added: "We have followed up the patients over the longer term and will publish the results of their progress at six months after their stroke in due course.

"It is incredibly important that clinicians become more aware of fatigue as it has a huge impact on rehabilitation and quality of life."

Dr Dale Webb, Director of Research and Information at the Stroke Association, said: "We are delighted to have supported this research, and hope that it will help lift the veil on what is one of the most distressing, poorly understood, and inadequately managed conditions caused by stroke. There is so much more that needs to be done, but this research is a significant step towards getting these [stroke](#) survivors the support they so desperately need."

More information: Avril Drummond et al. The Nottingham Fatigue after Stroke (NotFAST) study: Factors associated with severity of fatigue in stroke patients without depression, *Clinical Rehabilitation* (2017). [DOI: 10.1177/0269215517695857](https://doi.org/10.1177/0269215517695857)

Provided by University of Nottingham

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