

Future direction for stroke care in Ireland from perspectives of stroke survivors, caregivers and medical professionals

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A new study from RCSI's School of Population Health has found that future developments to Irish stroke services, according to those who are

most impacted, must prioritize specialist community-based rehabilitation, ongoing support for life after stroke and better information and support for navigating services.

The study, [published in PLOS ONE](#), is the first in Ireland to feature the opinions of those directly affected by stroke; including [survivors](#), their family caregivers and health care professionals. The researchers made a concerted effort to ensure that survivors with communication and cognitive difficulties were included.

As well as the three main priorities identified, the need for improved staffing was emphasized, along with access to specialist acute care and support for mental health.

Stroke survivors and caregivers also thought that there needed to be more attention paid to improving the speed of access to services for people with more unusual or atypical stroke symptoms.

Dr. Eithne Sexton, Lecturer, RCSI School of Population Health and research lead commented, "These findings point to a need for stroke services that are more consistent nationally and better resourced based on an understanding of the diverse needs of stroke survivors and their families. This type of population-based service planning is a key part of the Sláintecare strategy.

"We hope this study can contribute to the broader discussion on stroke care, informing policy and practice not only in Ireland but other countries with similar health care challenges."

Stroke survivors and caregivers related many positive experiences of stroke care through interviews, surveys and a stakeholder meeting, but also revealed significant difficulties in accessing needed services and supports. This included problems accessing rehabilitation, home care

hours, equipment to support stroke recovery, and support for mental health.

A major challenge identified by stroke survivors and their families was the difficulty of navigating the care system, compounded by inadequate communication and information dissemination.

"Priorities for developing stroke care in Ireland from the perspectives of [stroke](#) survivors, family caregivers and professionals involved in [stroke care](#): A mixed methods study" was carried out in collaboration with The Irish Heart Foundation and researchers from UCC and Beaumont Hospital.

More information: Eithne Sexton et al, Priorities for developing stroke care in Ireland from the perspectives of stroke survivors, family carers and professionals involved in stroke care: A mixed methods study, *PLOS ONE* (2024). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0297072](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0297072)

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