

June is Stroke Month Southwestern Ontario Stroke Strategy Media Backgrounder

June 18, 2007 For Immediate Release



Introduction:

June is Stroke Month. The Southwestern Ontario Stroke Strategy is raising awareness about stroke and the health care providers and organizations in the Southwestern Ontario community dedicated to realizing our vision of, "Fewer Strokes. Better Outcomes."

Theme:

Dispelling the Myths - Strokes are not an inevitable consequence of aging. Strokes are not a lifetime sentence. Most strokes are preventable and treatable.

Meet Natalie Destun.

Natalie is a fifteen year old Londoner. She lives at home with her parents and two younger siblings. She plays soccer, spends time on the computer and baby sits part-time. On July 16, 2006, while visiting a friend, Natalie experienced drooping in the right side of her face, right sided weakness, difficulty speaking, nausea and vomiting. Natalie had a stroke.

Within three hours of her stroke, Natalie was treated with a clot busting drug called tPA at Children's Hospital of Western Ontario. She then spent a month in the in-patient rehabilitation program at Parkwood Hospital. Following discharge from hospital she continued to participate in a variety of therapies tailored to her specific needs (occupational therapy, physical therapy and speech language pathology). Rehabilitation has helped Natalie make a meaningful recovery.

Natalie and her family would like to share their story with the Southwestern Ontario community and are willing to participate in media interviews. They are strong advocates of the local stroke system that rallied around Natalie, responding to her needs as a teenaged stroke patient and supporting her extended family during this difficult time.

Meet some of the SWO Health Care Professionals who support patients like Natalie.

- Anna Bluvol, Clinical Nurse Specialist, Rehabilitation Program, Parkwood Hospital (SJHC)
- Dayna Carter, Occupational Therapist, Rehabilitation Program, Parkwood Hospital (SJHC)
- Tricia Khan, Senior Director of Strategic Planning and Integration, Erie St. Clair CCAC
- Dr. Nathania Liem, Psychiatrist, Medical Director, Windsor Regional Hospital
- Chris O'Callaghan, Regional Manager, Southwestern Ontario Stroke Strategy (LHSC)
- Dr. Narayan Prasad, Paediatric Neurologist, Children's Hospital of Western Ontario (LHSC)
- Helen Risteen, Public Health Nurse, Chronic Disease Prevention, Grey Bruce Health Unit

The Facts:

- Stroke is the sudden loss of brain function that is caused when blood flow to the brain is interrupted.
- 50,000 strokes occur each year in Canada.
- Stroke is the fourth leading cause of death in Canada. 60% of those who survive a stroke are left with a disability.
- In this region, the Southwestern Ontario Stroke Strategy is committed to decreasing the incidence of stroke and improving patient care and outcomes for persons who experience stroke by reorganizing stroke care delivery - ensuring that all Ontarians have access to appropriate, quality stroke care in a timely manner.

For more information:

Please contact Megan Cornwell, Communications Specialist, Southwestern Ontario Stroke Strategy, to arrange interviews with Natalie and her family or any of the health care professionals listed above.

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Risk Factors for Stroke:

- High blood pressure
- Diabetes
- Smoking
- Overweight
- Not physically active
- Too much alcohol
- Heart disease
- High blood cholesterol
- Family History of Stroke or Heart Attack

Southwestern Ontario Partners in Stroke Prevention and Stroke Care

- Community Care Access Centres
- Family Physicians
- Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario
- Hospitals
- Long Term Care Homes
- Public Health Units

Stroke Warning Signs:

Stroke can be treated. That's why it is so important to recognize and respond to the warning signs.

- **Weakness** - Sudden loss of strength or sudden numbness in the face, arm or leg, even if temporary.
- **Trouble speaking** - Sudden difficulty speaking or understanding or sudden confusion, even if temporary.
- **Vision problems** - Sudden trouble with vision, even if temporary.
- **Headache** - Sudden severe and unusual headache.
- **Dizziness** - Sudden loss of balance, especially with any of the above signs.

If you experience any of these symptoms, call 9-1-1 or your local emergency number immediately.

Credit: Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario