



Jillian Skinner MP

Minister for Health Minister for Medical Research

MEDIA RELEASE

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FASTER, BETTER CARE FOR RURAL STROKE PATIENTS

Stroke patients in rural and regional areas will receive faster treatment and have better recovery outcomes following the launch of an innovative program by Health Minister Jillian Skinner.

The NSW Stroke Reperfusion Program - led by the Agency for Clinical Innovation (ACI) in partnership with the Ambulance Service of NSW and the state's Local Health Districts - is designed to see stroke patients receive targeted care faster from the onset of symptoms.

"Stroke is Australia's second greatest killer after heart disease and leaves many people with a disability. It's clear that time plays a major role when it comes to treatment and recovery for stroke patients," Mrs Skinner said.

Although death and disability can be reduced by early administration of thrombolytic therapy, which helps to break up or dissolve blood clots, studies show only three per cent of ischaemic stroke patients receive treatment within appropriate timeframes

The NSW Stroke Reperfusion Program is being rolled out across 20 hospitals, including Orange, Bathurst, Wagga Wagga, Tamworth and John Hunter Hospital. Under the program patients will:

- be identified within three hours of the first symptom by paramedics using the internationally recognised validated FAST (Face, Arm, Speech, Time) protocol;
- be transported to the closest 24/7 NSW Acute Stroke Thrombolysis Centre;
- be assessed rapidly within the emergency department;
- receive rapid brain imaging, investigations, neurology review and, if suitable, medication to dissolve blood clots;
- be less likely to suffer any long-term disability as a result of their stroke.

As part of the Stroke Reperfusion Program, all NSW paramedics are undergoing advanced stroke recognition training. Paramedics will transport suspected stroke patients to one of the 20 hospitals identified as having reperfusion expertise.

"The program will ensure effective thrombolytic therapy is available to more patients with ischaemic stroke, including people living in rural and regional areas, which will result in fewer deaths and less disability," Mrs Skinner said.

"This is a great example of organisations within NSW Health working together with a coordination approach to ensure better outcomes for patients across the state."

For more information on the NSW Stroke Reperfusion Program visit:
www.aci.health.nsw.gov.au.