

Unit 21:

Recognising and Managing the Symptoms of Stroke

Unit reference number: F/616/7312

Level: 2

Unit type: Optional

Credit value: 3

Guided learning hours: 28

Unit summary

A stroke can be a life-threatening condition and it affects thousands of individuals every year. Its impact can be life changing for the individual and their family. It is essential that care workers are aware of how to recognise a stroke and understand the need for emergency responses. A stroke can strike at any age, even in childhood. There is much research taking place into the risk factors, prevention and treatment of stroke and this informs the work and policies of care organisations.

In this unit, you will learn what a stroke is and how to recognise when a stroke is happening. You will gain an understanding of the risk factors associated with stroke and how they are managed. From this, you will learn how important an emergency response, treatment and management is to the outcome for the individual who has suffered a stroke.

Learning outcomes and assessment criteria

To pass this unit, the learner needs to demonstrate that they can meet all the learning outcomes for the unit. The assessment criteria outline the requirements the learner is expected to meet to achieve the unit.

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
1 Understand the causes of a stroke	1.1 Identify the changes in the brain associated with stroke 1.2 Outline other conditions that may be mistaken for stroke 1.3 Define the differences between stroke and transient ischaemic attack (TIA)
2 Understand how to recognise a stroke in an individual	2.1 Describe the signs and symptoms of stroke 2.2 Describe the key stages of stroke
3 Understand how to manage risk factors for stroke	3.1 State the prevalence of stroke in the UK 3.2 Identify the common risk factors for stroke 3.3 Define the steps that can be taken to reduce the risk of stroke
4 Understand the importance of emergency response and treatment for stroke	4.1 Outline why stroke is a medical emergency 4.2 Describe the immediate actions to be taken in response to an emergency stroke incident in line with agreed ways of working 4.3 Identify the impact on the individual of the key stages of stroke 4.4 Identify the information that needs to be included in reporting relevant and accurate history of the incident
5 Understand the management of stroke	5.1 Describe why effective stroke care is important to the management of stroke 5.2 Describe the potential changes that an individual may experience as a result of stroke 5.3 Identify support available to individuals and others affected by stroke

Content

What needs to be learned

Learning outcome 1: Understand the causes of a stroke

Changes in the brain

- Supply of blood is restricted or stopped, brain cells begin to die.
- This can lead to:
 - brain injury
 - disability
 - death.
- Main causes of strokes:
 - ischaemic
 - haemorrhagic.

Conditions mistaken as stroke

- Migraine headaches accompanied with any of the following symptoms, e.g. temporary facial paralysis, vertigo, blurry vision, weakness or numbness in limbs.
- Dizziness.
- Bell's palsy: facial weakness, trigeminal neuralgia.
- Hypoglycaemia.
- Hemiparesis.
- Speech problems.
- Vision disturbances.
- Multiple sclerosis.
- Epilepsy.

Differences between stroke and transient ischaemic attack (TIA)

- Length of time of symptoms.
- Temporary clot with blood flow returning to normal on its own (TIA).
- Stroke-like symptoms but does not damage brain cells or cause permanent disability (TIA).
- The risk factors of both are the same.

What needs to be learned

Learning outcome 2: Understand how to recognise a stroke in an individual

Signs and symptoms of stroke

- Sudden onset.
- Complete paralysis of one side of the body.
- Sudden loss or blurring of vision.
- Slurred speech.
- Dizziness.
- Confusion.
- Poor balance and co-ordination.
- Dysphagia (difficulty swallowing).
- Sudden and very severe headache.
- Loss of consciousness.

Key stages of stroke

- Face, Arms, Speech and Time (FAST):
 - Face—the face may have dropped on one side, the person may not be able to smile, or their mouth or eye may have drooped
 - Arms—the person with suspected stroke may not be able to lift both arms and keep them there because of weakness or numbness in one arm
 - Speech—their speech may be slurred or garbled, or the person may not be able to talk at all despite appearing to be awake
 - Time—it's time to dial 999 immediately if any of these signs or symptoms are noticed.

Learning outcome 3: Understand how to manage risk factors for stroke

The prevalence of stroke in the UK

- Stroke statistics (Stroke Association, UK).

The common risk factors for stroke

- Age.
- Ethnicity.
- Genetics.
- High blood pressure.
- Diabetes.
- Atrial fibrillation.
- Sickle cell disease.
- Lifestyle:
 - diet – high cholesterol
 - lack of exercise
 - smoking
 - alcohol abuse
 - illegal drug use.
- Obesity.

What needs to be learned

Reduce the risk of stroke and subsequent stroke

- Moderate exercise.
- Balanced diet.
- Reduce alcohol intake.
- Avoid smoking.
- Do not use illegal drugs.
- Manage underlying medical conditions.
- Lose weight if overweight.
- Take prescribed medication.
- Regular health check-ups.

Learning outcome 4: Understand the importance of emergency response and treatment for stroke

Medical emergency

- A matter of life and death.
- Lack of oxygen to brain tissues.
- Time is vital – immediate specialist medical support.

Actions

- FAST.
- Check that the individual is in a safe position.
- Do not give food/drink while waiting for help.
- Check airway is open and clear – recovery position.
- Call 999 – check your policies and procedures.

Impact of key stages

- Sudden onset.
- Blockage or bleed in brain.
- Emergency treatment.
- Hospital admission and tests.
- Transfer to specialist stroke unit.
- Treatment.
- Recovery – reduction in swelling to brain.
- Rehabilitation.
- Prevention from further strokes.

Reporting

- Initial symptoms.
- Time of incident.
- Help received.
- Who was contacted.
- Any other medical information.

What needs to be learned

Learning outcome 5: Understand the management of stroke

Potential changes

- Paralysis down one side of body.
- Mobility difficulties.
- Problems with swallowing.
- Problems with vision.
- Incontinence.
- Fatigue.
- Communication difficulties.
- Problems with memory and concentration.
- Changes to emotions – depression, anxiety.
- Changes to behaviour.
- Changes to personality.

Effective stroke care and the management of stroke

- Psychological and emotional wellbeing.
- Improved recovery.
- Active participation.
- Quality of life.
- Needs met.

Support available to individuals and others affected by stroke

- Stroke organisations.
- Stroke support groups.
- NHS.
- Charities.

Information for tutors

Suggested resources

Books

Barnett HJM and Spence D – *Stroke Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation* (McGraw-Hill, 2012) ISBN 9780071762359

Sassoon R – *Understanding Stroke* (Book Guild Ltd, 2013) ISBN9781846248436

Websites

www.differentstrokes.co.uk

A charity providing advice and support for younger stroke survivors.

www.nhs.uk

NHS choices website – Health A to Z – stroke causes, prevention, signs and symptoms.

www.stroke.org.uk

Stroke Association – useful information with up-to-date statistics about stroke in the UK.

Assessment

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the associated qualification specification for this unit.

This unit is internally assessed. To pass this unit, the evidence that the learner presents for assessment must demonstrate that they have met the required standard specified in the learning outcomes and assessment criteria, and the requirements of the assessment strategy.

To ensure that the assessment tasks and activities enable learners to produce valid, sufficient, authentic and appropriate evidence that meets the assessment criteria, centres should follow the guidance given in *Section 8 Assessment* of the associated qualification specification and meet the requirements from the assessment strategy given below.

Wherever possible, centres should adopt an holistic approach to assessing the units in the qualification. This gives the assessment process greater rigour and minimises repetition, time and the burden of assessment on all parties involved in the process.

Unit assessment requirements

This unit must be assessed in accordance with the assessment strategy (principles) in *Annexe A* of the associated qualification specification.

Assessment of all learning outcomes (knowledge) may take place in or outside of a real work environment.