

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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National audit shows London hospitals top in stroke care

Hospitals in the capital are providing residents with world-class stroke care through the London Stroke Strategy. Five London sites have leapfrogged into positions as the best in the country, according to data released through the National Sentinel Stroke Audit, which measures hospital performance against national clinical guidelines and quality of care for stroke patients.

Each year approximately 11,000 people suffer a stroke in London, making it the second biggest killer in the capital and the most common cause of disability.

The London Stroke Strategy ensures all suspected stroke patients in Greater London are admitted to one of eight Hyper-Acute Stroke Units (HASUs) in the capital where they receive 24/7 access to specialised stroke staff, high-tech CT scanning equipment and clot busting drugs (thrombolysis).

Once stabilised at the HASU (up to 72 hours) patients are transferred to one of 24 Stroke Units (SUs) where they receive longer term care and rehabilitation. The system expects to save 400 lives per year and significantly reduce long term disabilities in the capital.

The system is an innovative approach to rapid access, transparency and sharing of clinical data for improved results and empowerment of front-line staff to make decisions that beneficially impact stroke patient care.

It was created following a consultation in the capital. Guidance for implementation was provided by the five London stroke networks. Stroke networks were developed in 2007 as part of the National Stroke Strategy. They serve to connect patients, the public and healthcare professionals to improve services as they share in decision making along every aspect of the patient journey.

NHS staff across the entire patient pathway including the London Ambulance Service have worked collaboratively to create and implement the system which became fully operational on 19th July.

'The London Stroke Strategy provides the best in evidence-based stroke care to all residents of the capital,' says Dr Tony Rudd, London Clinical Director for Stroke and Consultant Stroke Physician at St Thomas' Hospital. 'The data is unequivocal; this is a quality driven system that is providing exceptional outcomes. We will build on the initial success of our preliminary data analysis in acute care towards an integrated, world-class system from prevention to rehabilitation.'

Of the top seven sites in the nation, five are HASUs in the London Stroke Strategy: St George's Healthcare NHS Trust, University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust, Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust and King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.

All eight London HASUs are ranked in the top quartile of national performance.

The significant progress made by London hospitals in such a short period is a clear indication that the London Stroke Strategy is yielding the improved outcomes compared to national levels:

- In London all patients have 24/7 access to thrombolysis (clot busting drugs) whilst just one half of the hospitals in the report offer similar access.
- Three times more patients are now thrombolised in London (data from same five month period: 174 in 2009 to 587 in 2010).

London Cardiac and Stroke Networks

- London sites have one-and-a-half times more availability to specialist early supported discharge (ESD) teams compared to the national average. Evidence shows that specialist ESD results in better outcomes over conventional stroke unit care for selected patients.
- In six months more than 2,675 patients have been taken by London Ambulance Service to HASUs. The transport time from home to HASU is less than 30 minutes in 93% of cases.

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Notes to editors:

- If you would like more information about the London Stroke Strategy and the pan-London stroke networks, please visit www.slcsn.nhs.uk/lss or contact Andrea Marlow at the South London Cardiac and Stroke Network on 020 8812 5953 or info@slcsn.nhs.uk.
- The location of the eight HASUs in London may be found online, www.slcsn.nhs.uk/lss/hasu-location.html.
- The London Stroke Strategy was created following a capital-wide consultation. It was found that variances existed in the delivery of stroke care. Access to specialist services was limited in certain areas. The new system provides rapid transport and top quality care to these services for all.
- The National Sentinel Audit for Stroke may be downloaded from the Royal College of Physicians website <http://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/CLINICAL-STANDARDS/CEEU/CURRENT-WORK/STROKE/Pages/Audit.aspx>.

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