

NEWS RELEASE

CONTACT:

Scott Meyers, American Heart Association
(614) 396-4342
Public Affairs, Ohio Department of Health
(614) 644-8562

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OHIO AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALES MORE LIKELY TO DIE AFTER STROKE

The Burden of Stroke in Ohio Report Identifies Disparities and Awareness Gaps

COLUMBUS – The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) and the American Heart Association (AHA) today released the state’s first comprehensive report on the impact of stroke on Ohioans.

At a joint news conference, health experts and stroke survivors presented key findings from *The Burden of Stroke in Ohio*. The report contains current data to help identify existing resources, capabilities and limitations for stroke prevention and treatment. It also provides comprehensive recommendations to improve stroke care in the state.

“The devastating impact of strokes can be lessened,” said ODH Director J. Nick Baird, M.D. “This is especially important in the African-American community, which is disproportionately impacted by stroke.”

In Ohio, African-American males have a stroke death rate 53 percent higher than any other racial-gender group while African-American females have the highest overall likelihood of suffering a stroke, according to the report.

To lessen the impact of stroke, Ohioans must learn the five stroke symptoms: sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body; sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding; sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes; sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination; and sudden severe headache with no known cause.

The report shows half of all patients hospitalized for stroke require additional care in skilled nursing facilities and rehabilitation centers – making stroke the leading cause of disability in adults. Quickly recognizing symptoms may lead to more successful treatment and a greater chance the patient will be discharged to home, rather than a care facility.

The report also highlights the importance of controlling high blood pressure to reduce the risk for stroke. More than 75 percent of Ohio adults have at least one modifiable risk factor for stroke: high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, physical inactivity, smoking, high cholesterol or low fruit and vegetable consumption.

“The Burden of Stroke report provides a baseline and a catalyst to develop strategies to strengthen all aspects of Ohio’s stroke systems of care—from public awareness to treatment regimens to rehabilitation,” said John Meiners, executive vice president of the American Heart Association’s Ohio Valley Affiliate. “The ultimate

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goal is to create a coordinated and integrated statewide system to better fight the prevalence of stroke, the No. 3 killer of Ohioans.”

Today’s release of The Burden of Stroke in Ohio was held at the American Heart Association’s Ohio Affiliate Office in Columbus. The following speakers provided remarks:

- Donna James: retired president, Nationwide Strategic Investments (a Fortune 500 diversified financial services company), 2007 Go Red For Women chairwoman and stroke survivor.
- James Hodsdon, MD, FAHA: American Heart Association/American Stroke Association affiliate board president.
- Debbie Arms: chief for the Division of Prevention, Ohio Department of Health.
- John Moore: stroke survivor and EMT.
- Michael Sayre, MD: associate professor, Department of Emergency, The Ohio State University Medical Center.

For additional information or a copy of the report, visit <http://www.odh.ohio.gov/> or <http://www.americanheart.org>.

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Contact: Ohio Department of Health, Office of Public Affairs, 614-644-8562
Contact: American Heart Association, Scott Meyers, 614-396-4342