



STROKE WATCH



OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE
SINGAPORE NATIONAL STROKE ASSOCIATION

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Saturday, 29 October is World Stroke Day 2011

By Ann Yin, SNSA Committee Member

World Stroke Day provides the best opportunity to increase the awareness of stroke and the actions that can be taken to fight it. On World Stroke Day 2010, the World Stroke Organisation (WSO) launched the “**One in Six**” Campaign to highlight the harsh reality that one in six people will have a stroke in their lifetime.



With acknowledgements to Joint NHG-Singhealth Stroke Disease Management Workgroup

On this World Stroke day, as with other WSO members and partners throughout the world, the Singapore National Stroke Association (SNSA) aims to put forth a simple life-saving message: Do not take chances. One in six people is at risk for stroke – It could be you. Learn the facts, Save a Life today. Act Now!

The campaign is asking people to commit to the **six challenges**:

- 1) Know your personal risk factors: high blood pressure, diabetes, and high blood cholesterol.
- 2) By physically active and exercise regularly.
- 3) Avoid obesity by keeping to a healthy diet.
- 4) Limit alcohol consumption.
- 5) Avoid cigarette smoke. If you smoke, seek help to stop now.
- 6) Learn to recognize the warning signs of stroke and how to take action.

Please read the back page for details of World Stroke Day 2011 events and upcoming SNSA activities.

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One-handed in a two-handed world

By Sheela James

Occupational Therapist, Singapore General Hospital

Having a stroke may affect the way people perform daily activities including eating, dressing and preparing a meal. Day-to-day activities may be more difficult for a stroke survivor because of difficulty in moving or feeling one side of the body. These challenges can be overcome with the use of assistive devices and changing the way a task is performed. This article describes some ways to live with “one-hand in a two-handed world”.

Meal Time

Stroke survivors may have difficulty scooping food from a plate without spillage. The plate may move during attempts to scoop food.

A bowl with a suction base (Figure 1) or a simple non-skid mat placed below the plate can be used to prevent skidding. A scoop plate with a raised edge on one side (Figure 2) aids in scooping food without spilling.



Figure 1



Figure 2

Utensils:

Regular cutlery can be difficult to grip. Muscle weakness can make it difficult to bring the spoon to the mouth.

Built-up handles on forks, spoons and knives (Figure 3) are useful for people who do not have a good grip. It provides a larger base for holding thus enabling independent feeding. An angled spoon (Figure 4) can make it easier for the spoon to reach the mouth.



Figure 3

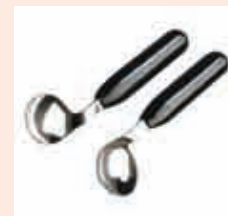


Figure 4

Bath Time:

A long-handled bath sponge (Figure 5) is a useful adaptive device for stroke survivors who are unable to reach their legs or back during showering due to limitations in their movements. When combined with a shower chair and hand-held shower it can provide a safe environment for showering.



Figure 5

Dressing:

Stroke survivors may have difficulty managing buttons. Zip up shirts can be used to make the dressing task easy. Buttons on existing shirts can be replaced with Velcro straps for easy fastening.

A long handled reacher (Figure 6) can be useful to put on pants while in a seated position for individuals who have difficulty bending down or reaching forward. It can also be handy to help pick up objects from ground or to retrieve objects from high cabinets (please be careful though!).



Figure 6

Cooking:

Preparing a meal with the use of only one hand may sound daunting.

A special one-handed cutting board (Figure 7) provides a stable base where food can be stabilized on pins for cutting. The corner provides space for bread to be positioned for making sandwiches or spreading jam.

Other useful devices in the kitchen include non-slip mats to stabilize jars while opening them and an electric can opener. Also look out for storage containers that can be opened with the push of one hand.

Many of these assistive devices can be purchased from outlets which sell rehabilitation products. Others may be easily available from supermarkets or shops selling household products. Online purchases can also be done. It is advisable to seek the help of occupational therapist to choose the device that best suits your needs.



Figure 7



Tips on Smoking Cessation

By Amanda Lee
Pharmacist, Certified Quit Smoking Consultant
Department of Pharmacy, Singapore General Hospital

Cigarette smoking is known to have detrimental effects on the body. It is linked to build-up of fatty substances and blockage in blood arteries that can lead to a stroke. Also, smoking makes your blood thicker and more likely to clot, increasing your risk of stroke and heart attack. Nicotine in cigarettes raises blood pressure and carbon monoxide reduces the blood's ability to carry oxygen to the brain. Quitting at any age can reduce your risk of stroke and heart diseases to a level almost equal to that of those who have never smoked.

However, quitting can be difficult. Before you embark on your journey, it is important to understand the different components of cigarette smoking in order to better overcome the difficulties and boost your success of quitting. The 3 components of smoking addiction are:

- 1) Physiologic dependence (craving and addiction),
- 2) Behavioural dependence (habit), and
- 3) Psychological dependence (social belonging and stress relief).

Physiologic dependence: Nicotine present in cigarettes gives smokers a good feeling and creates a craving for cigarettes. This eventually leads to addiction and results in withdrawal symptoms when smokers try to quit. These withdrawal symptoms include irritability, difficulty in concentrating, headaches, runny nose and coughing. Cough and flu are signs that the lungs are starting to function again to clear away tar, dead cells and extra mucus accumulated from cigarettes. To soothe an itchy throat, sip warm water and suck on sugar-free cough drops. Tingling hands and feet are signs of recovering blood circulation. Headaches are likely due to your brain adapting to an increased level of oxygen. These withdrawal symptoms are actually signs that your body is recovering! Hang in there, as these withdrawal symptoms normally disappear within 2 to 3 weeks. By understanding that your body is recovering, you will find it easier to accept and embrace the benefits of quitting!

Cravings are intense recurring urges to smoke. The good news is that these urges will pass after 3 to 5 minutes. These are some tips to overcome the cravings – **4Ds. (Not the 4-digit lottery!)**

- 1) **Distract yourself by doing something else to prevent you from lighting up.**
- 2) **Delay lighting up.** The urge to smoke only lasts 5 minutes, so persevere!
- 3) **Deep breathing exercises.** This will help your body to relax and de-stress.
- 4) **Drink a glass of water slowly.** This will help ease the craving for something in your mouth and throat.

Nicotine Replacement Therapies (NRT) are available to help you cope with withdrawal symptoms. NRT satisfies your craving of cigarettes, yet lessens the urge to smoke. NRT come in various forms such as patches, inhalers, lozenges and chewing gums. These NRT are available from community pharmacies, and do not require a prescription from a doctor. Pharmacists will assess your situation and recommend the most suitable NRT for you.

Behavioural dependence: The habit of smoking (such as lighting up after meals, when in the toilet etc.) is another reason why quitting can be difficult. Avoid smoking triggers and situations which may tempt you to smoke, such as after a meal, or with your smoker friends.

Place 'triggers': Try to avoid places where you used to smoke such as the coffee shop, at least for the time being when the urge to smoke is greatest.

People 'triggers': Surround yourself with positive people to help you quit. Family and friends may provide support and encouragement by accompanying you to non-smoking places and distracting you from thinking about cigarettes. You could ask smoker friends to respect your decision to quit and not to tempt you with cigarettes.

Situation 'triggers': Change your daily routine to distract yourself. Try to avoid coffee, if previously coffee and cigarettes go hand-in-hand for you. Take water, milk or juices instead. Break your habits by changing daily routines (e.g. going for a walk or brushing your teeth after meals instead of smoking). Keep your hands occupied (e.g. doing household chores, tending to fish in the aquarium or plants in the balcony, surfing the web).

Psychological dependence: Some turn to smoking to deal with their daily problems and stress. Smokers must identify practical alternative coping skills as they attempt to abstain from smoking. Some healthy ways to manage stress would be relaxation exercises and yoga, listening to your favourite music, relaxing with a soothing cup of herbal tea, etc. Constantly remind yourself the reasons as to why you want to quit e.g. health reasons, for family, a promise to someone and yourself. Treat yourself with the savings from cigarettes and take up new hobbies.

Lastly, Quit Smoking Services are available in the various hospitals, polyclinics and community pharmacies. These services offer advice about the harmful effects of smoking, educational pamphlets on the benefits of quitting, as well as one-to-one sessions with a quit-smoking counsellor. In addition, the Health Promotion Board (HPB) manages a Quitline – 1800-438 2000 which is staffed by trained quit advisors who provide personalized support and advice on quitting smoking.



SNSA Visit To Desaru

By Ms Tan Wan Jiun, SNSA committee member



It was daybreak when we gathered at the SNSA premises for the Desaru trip. Everyone was eager to board the bus. And yes, we were going JB!!! SNSA's first "overseas" trip. We finally cleared customs after much hassle and found ourselves at Gelang Patah. There were breakfast choices of either Famous Fish-ball noodles stall or the Indian prata shop. We even had a short stop-over at YeeXiang Confectionery which is famous for pastries and cookies.

Our next destination was Tebaru City. Due to time constraint, we had only one hour for shopping. However this was greatly compensated by the delicious seafood lunch at Telok Senget. The spread included chicken, tofu omelette, butter prawns, fish, black pepper crab and mixed vegetables.

Desaru Fruit Farm was the next destination. A guide brought us around the fruit farm, explaining the differences between types

of fruit and the riping season. The guide strongly encouraged us to return in July/August for the tasting of MaoShanWang Durian. (MaoShanWang Durian is supposedly the top grade for durians). Besides the fruits, there were herbal gardens and a mini zoo. All of use left the Fruit Farm, having had a great time, with a complementary fruit box.

It took us another hour to reach Kota Tinggi and then it was dinner time. Dinner was at a restaurant within walking distance to the River Cruise. At 7pm, we boarded the cruise to watch the fireflies. It was dark and quiet. The fireflies lit the trees like Christmas decorations. The difference in glowing time, we learnt, signifies the sexuality of the fireflies. We were snapping away with our cameras but no photo was able to capture the glowing sensation as we saw during the cruise. It was indeed a beautiful night. Eventually we headed home tired but glad that we spent a day more fulfilling than any other day.

Over \$3000 raised for SNSA

On 20th August 2011, 29 students of Yuying Secondary School's Service Learning Club participated in the Fund Raising event organised by Charlton Park Neighbourhood Committee. They visited some 600 households in Charlton Park, collecting old newspapers, clothing and cash. Through their hard work and effort they managed to raise a total of \$3,135 for Singapore National Stroke Association. At the end of the day the students were rewarded with a spread of sumptuous lunch. Thank you Charlton Park NC, Yuying Secondary School's Service Learning Club students and their teachers.



Talk on nutrition organised by SNSA

By Diane Theng, SNSA committee member

On 16 July 2011 Saturday morning, members of Singapore National Stroke Association (SNSA) started streaming in to attend Stroke Club. Stroke Club is a place where stroke survivors, family and friends learn more about stroke and share their experiences. By meeting regularly, sharing experiences and encouraging each other, members help one another to face and overcome common challenges.

One of the highlights was a talk by Ms Sarah Sinaram, a senior dietician, who shared how to read and interpret food labels, what are "good" and "bad" fat in our food. The participant particularly enjoyed the post-talk session where they had a hands-on session on reading food labels.





SNSA's youngest stroke volunteer for befriending services.

By Eugene Escanan, SNSA President

In this issue of stroke watch, we would like to introduce this 5 year old boy by the name of Miguel Antonio Gutierrez Escanan, our youngest SNSA volunteer. You might had seen him roaming around SNSA premises during stroke clubs or other events and in Ang Mo Kio Hospital visiting stroke patients together with his stroke survivor and volunteer father.

Entrusted by his mother to his dad on Saturdays when she is working, Miguel's father decided to include him in the team of befriending volunteers. Not long after Miguel joined SNSA in March 2010, he showed encouraging effectiveness. He draws great smiles from patients and brings joy to the families he gets acquainted with.



When he's not around at some sessions, the patients and family members will look for and asked after the boy. He is well known among nurses as the little boy with an exceptional ability to entertain and talk to patients. With this boy's presence at least for a short period of time the patient's mood brightens and the conversation often focuses on how this special boy helps his stroke survivor father.

It is his father's idea to train him to be more sociable and promote family support to stroke survivors helping them with their recovery. In 2006 and 2007 Miguel witnessed the stroke attacks of his father and grandfather. He was the one who found his grandfather lying on the floor after suffering a stroke and alerted people around the house.

Miguel is a delightful boy which an uplifting spirit – an inspiration to all of us at SNSA.

SNSA Volunteer Training

On the 16th of July 2011, the SNSA held a volunteer training session on basic attending skills. There was a good turn-out with 15 participants including SNSA's president Mr. Eugene, a stroke survivor. There was much interaction and exchange of ideas on how the volunteers could overcome their personal challenges. Volunteers also shared their experiences in befriending stroke patients. The practice sessions using the different attending skills enabled the participants to appreciate their role as volunteers better. The volunteers were enthusiastic and participated actively in the discussion, inspired by their desire and passion to lend a listening ear to stroke patients.

SNSA is actively recruiting volunteers to assist the befriending and stroke club activities at various hospitals. Upcoming plans include quarterly training-cum-sharing sessions to engage the volunteers and the development of volunteers' kits.





Join us at the Singapore National Stroke Association

You may be a stroke survivor, a caregiver for a stroke patient, someone who has a loved one who has suffered a stroke, a healthcare professional involved in stroke care or a member of public who would like to support the cause of stroke patients in Singapore. One in 6 persons suffer a stroke in their lifetime. Thus we will all know a relative or friend or colleague or acquaintance who has suffered from a stroke.

The Singapore National Stroke Association (SNSA) is a voluntary group of stroke survivors, their carers and volunteers. Our mission is to encourage and facilitate post-stroke adjustment, as well as support educational, research and other activities relating to the prevention, diagnosis, causes and treatment of stroke.

Joining the SNSA will be affirming your support for stroke patients in Singapore. As a member of SNSA, you will be able to be involved in SNSA activities as participant or a volunteer. These include support groups, befriender and counseling services, activities for stroke survivors, support for caregivers of stroke patients and stroke public education. You will also receive StrokeWatch, our periodical newsletter.

Our activities aim to:

- 1) Provide support for stroke survivors adjusting to life after a stroke through support groups and counselling activities in cooperation with relevant public and private agencies and groups
- 2) Build up community support for stroke patients and their caregivers by increasing stroke awareness in the community and promoting professional and volunteer services to care for stroke survivors
- 3) Establish a stroke resource centre which gathers, compiles and disseminates stroke information, as well as stroke public education programmes

Types of membership:

Ordinary Membership is open to all Singapore Citizens and Singapore Permanent Residents. Ordinary members have the right to vote and hold office. The registration fee is \$10 per calendar year.

Life membership is also available and avoids the hassle of yearly payment. The registration fee for life members is a one-time payment of \$80.

Corporate membership is targeted to firms, organizations, government departments, clubs, societies and institutions registered in Singapore who wish to support the SNSA mission. There is a one-time payment of \$500.

Associate membership is open to non-residents of Singapore. The registration fee is \$5 per calendar year. Associate members have no voting rights and may not hold office.

You may use this form here or download a copy from our website at www.snsa.org.sg. Please fax to 63584139, email to sporensa@singnet.com.sg, or mail to 26 Dunearn Road S(309423).

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / RENEWAL FORM

Name *Prof / Dr / Mr / Mrs / Miss: _____

NRIC No: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Address: _____

_____ Singapore _____

Occupation: _____

Tel: _____ (H) _____ (HP/Pgr) _____ (O) _____ (Fax)

E-mail address: _____

- I am a Patient
 Caregiver
 Healthcare Professional
 Others, please specify : _____

Please tick the membership category*:

- Ordinary Member - \$10.00 per calendar year
 Life Member - \$80.00
 Corporate Member - \$1000.00 (one off)

In addition*:

- I would like to make a donation of \$ _____ to the Association.

Enclosed please find *cash / cheque: _____ for S _____.

Date of application : _____

Cheques should be payable to: Singapore National Stroke Association

**Please delete or tick appropriately.*

The SNSA is organising a public forum on stroke in partnership with Ang Mo Kio-Thye Hua Kwan Community Hospital, Health Promotion Board, National Healthcare Group – SingHealth Stroke Disease Management Workgroup, Nanyang Polytechnic, Tan Tock Seng Hospital Department of Rehabilitation Medicine and Yio Chu Kang Community Centre.

The event is to be held on Saturday, 29 October at Yio Chu Kang Community Centre. There will be skit performances by Nanyang Polytechnic students, talks in English and Mandarin by stroke physicians and sharing by stroke survivors on their journey with stroke recovery. Participants can try out games at a Wii station and visit various display booths. A cooking demonstration by a dietitian of AMK-THK Hospital is also included in the programme.

Please do come and join us to celebrate World Stroke Day 2011 to learn more about the fight against STROKE. See you on Saturday, 29 October!

For registration, please call SNSA @6358 4138.

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Activities for World Stroke Day 2011 & upcoming SNSA activities

| DATE | EVENT | VENUE | REMARK |
|---------------------|---|---|--|
| 29th October | World Stroke day public forum in English and Mandarin | Yio Chu Kang Community Centre | Registration: To call SNSA @ 6358 4138 - including talks on by doctors and stroke survivors - a skit by Nanyang Polytechnic - Healthy Cooking demonstration - Booth to try our rehabilitation Wii games - Free body mass measurement |
| 29th October | Stroke public forum in Malay | Changi General Hospital | For enquiries, please email to public_forum@cgh.com.sg or contact Corporate Affairs at 6850 2729; 6850 2735 |
| 21st & 22nd October | 13th Singapore Stroke Conference | College of Medicine Building Auditorium | |
| 10th September | Mid Autumn Festival | SNSA premises | 11.30am to 2pm at SNSA premises, 26 Dunearn Road. Wii games competition and buffet lunch. Prizes will be given out to winners. \$5 for SNSA members. To register call SNSA @ 6358 4138 |

* Subject to changes. Please confirm with Anna Sebastian at 6358 4138 nearer the date.



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