

News

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Integrate stroke risk app into PMS, says inventor

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An award-winning researcher wants health professionals to start using his stroke risk app as a prevention and education tool, integrated into their practice management systems, to reduce the country's growing stroke burden.

Auckland University of Technology (AUT) professor Valery Feigin this month won the MacDiarmid Medal for his work on international stroke epidemiology, which reveals that while the rate of strokes per thousand is going down, the absolute number of strokes is going up.

The stroke rate in New Zealand was 2.5 for every 1000 people a year, 30 years ago and is now only one per 1000, so the rate is dropping, Professor Feigin explains.

However, population growth means that where 1400 people had a stroke in New Zealand 10-years ago, the number has increased to 2200 by 2013.

The number of stroke survivors has also increased dramatically from around 40,000, 10 years ago to 50,000 now, he says.

70 per cent of stroke survivors left disabled

In 20 years the number of stroke survivors will have doubled, but health services will not and unlike with a heart attack where life usually goes mostly back to normal afterwards, Professor Feigin says more than 70 per cent of stroke survivors are left disabled.

Despite this, current stroke prevention strategies only target the 10 per cent of the population at high risk of stroke, when actually 80 per cent of those who suffer a stroke fall into the moderate to low risk group. This group isn't motivated to do anything because they are told they are low risk, he says.

This is where the riskometer smart phone app comes in.

App identifies stroke risk factors

The app [identifies people's stroke risk factors](#), shows their stroke risk compared to those without risk factors, shows how to control these factors and can monitor their success.

It also comes with a couple of educational videos and people can forward their data to their GP who can integrate it into their PMS.

Professor Feigin hopes it will motivate people to make lifestyle changes and reduce their risk.

He says the app has been downloaded in 70 countries, endorsed by most international stroke organisations and is probably the most recognised medical app among all 100,000 worldwide.

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With most people owning a smart phone and the app costing nothing or US\$3 for the pro version, Professor Feigin sees it as the most cost effective way of delivering a population-wide intervention strategy.

“Knowledge is always good so education should be available to as many people as possible,” he says.

Stroke symptoms on smart phones

He points out that the Waikato FAST campaign, aimed at showing people how to recognise a stroke, cost \$5 million and only increased awareness from 19 to 39 per cent.

If people have the stroke symptoms on their smart phones from the app they can always refer back to it and it’s free, he says.

There is good medication for stroke sufferers if they receive treatment early enough, but most people don’t get to hospital until six to eight hours after a stroke has occurred – which is too late.

“Health professionals and lay people need to start using the app as soon as possible so lives can be saved.”

Contains research component

The app also contains a research component which looks at the significance of risk factors.

Currently researchers only have 5 per cent of the data needed for strong epidemiological research into stroke, but this app allows people to send their encrypted data with just one click to a central data base at AUT where it will become part of a major international study.

The data will also contribute to heart attacks, dementia and type 2 diabetes as they share many of the same risk factors.

Originally trained in Russia, Professor Feigin has worked at the Mayo Clinic in the US, in Holland and at the University of Auckland, before taking up his role as director of the National Institute for Stroke & Applied Neurosciences at AUT.



2015 MacDiarmid Medal - Valery Feigin

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