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Study sets the scene to prioritise stroke care for First Nations Australians

Research highlights more must be done to improve stroke care for First Nations People, with current outcomes failing to meet national standards.

The study, *The Incidence of Stroke in the First Nations and non-Indigenous populations of Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory*, revealed the average age for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (First Nations) People to have a first-ever stroke is 55, 16 years younger than non-Indigenous Australians.

Stroke Neurologist and Australian Stroke Alliance Senior Research Fellow Dr Anna Balabanski will discuss these results and highlight opportunities to improve care at the [30th Annual Scientific Meeting of the Stroke Society of Australasia](#) this week (October 12-15).

Dr Balabanski said the higher incidence of stroke at a younger age is an issue that can and must be addressed.

“These communities deserve the highest standard of care, and past attempts to improve health outcomes haven't always been carried out in culturally appropriate ways,” Dr Balabanski said.

“The results of this research will be used to inform region-specific, culturally safe interventions driven by First Nations communities. We are working together with First Nations communities to find ways to help prevent stroke and improve access to the urgent medical treatment needed to improve stroke outcomes.”

This study examined hospital and death datasets between 2001 and 2015 to identify stroke admissions and stroke-related deaths, providing a broad and robust overview of First Nations populations of Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory. It was the largest multi-jurisdictional person-linked dataset to date.

Stroke Society of Australasia (SSA) President Professor Bernard Yan said this is an incredibly important area of research.

“This study highlights the need to prioritise stroke care for First Nations Australians urgently,” Professor Yan said.

“First Nations People are impacted by stroke unnecessarily because culturally appropriate tools are not available. We must do all we can to prevent stroke to save lives and reduce disability.”

One recent development to assist and empower the First Nations community after stroke is the launch of [Our Stroke Journey](#), a Stroke Foundation booklet which provides tailored information on treatment and care to improve the recovery journey and outcomes.

Other key topics to be showcased at SSA 2021 include the impact of the telestroke roll-out in New South Wales one year after implementation, the role of diet in secondary prevention of stroke and lifestyle risk factors for young adult stroke. The conference unites hundreds of stroke clinicians to hear about the latest

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research and innovations in the field. It is being held largely online due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, while Western Australian locals will gather at Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre.

For more information visit <https://ssastrokeconference.com.au/>

Stroke Foundation is marking its 25th anniversary this October, 2021. Its mission is to prevent stroke, save lives and enhance recovery. Visit www.strokefoundation.org.au



Image: Dr Anna Balabanski will present the findings of the study, The Incidence of Stroke in the First Nations and non-Indigenous populations of Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory, at the [30th Annual Scientific Meeting of the Stroke Society of Australasia](#) this week (October 12-15).

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