

# Public misidentifies strokes

People do not know risk factors or symptoms study says

CHICAGO (AP) — Many Americans do not recognize the signs of a stroke in time to get themselves or others potentially lifesaving treatment now available to thwart America's third-leading killer, a new survey found.

The only approved stroke-fighting drug became available less than two years ago, and it must be given within three hours after a stroke starts — making early detection and immediate treatment vital.

"The No. 1 reason people don't get treated is because they don't get there in time," said Dr. Arthur M. Pancioli, lead author in a new survey published in Wednesday's Journal of the American Medical Association.

"We're talking about the leading cause of adult disability, and yet our public really doesn't understand it," said Pancioli, an assistant professor of emergency medicine at the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine.

Stroke kills 158,000 people yearly and has left more than one million Americans disabled to some extent, the American Heart Association says.

The AHA said the survey "reinforces information which has been stated many times — the public is not knowledgeable enough about stroke, and in order to fight stroke, they need to know more about it and what to do when it happens."

Only 57 percent of respondents in the survey — which

involved 1,880 people in the Cincinnati area who were typical of stroke sufferers in age, sex and race — knew even one warning sign of stroke, the researchers said.

The area is similar to the United States overall in age, sex, percentage of blacks and economic status, researchers said.

The warning signs of a stroke are a sudden severe headache; unexplained dizziness, unsteadiness or a fall; loss of vision, especially in one eye; difficulty speaking or comprehending; and numbness on one side of the body.

Only 68 percent knew even one risk factor for stroke, such as high blood pressure; cigarette smoking; heart disease; or a heart-rhythm disturbance called atrial fibrillation, the authors said.

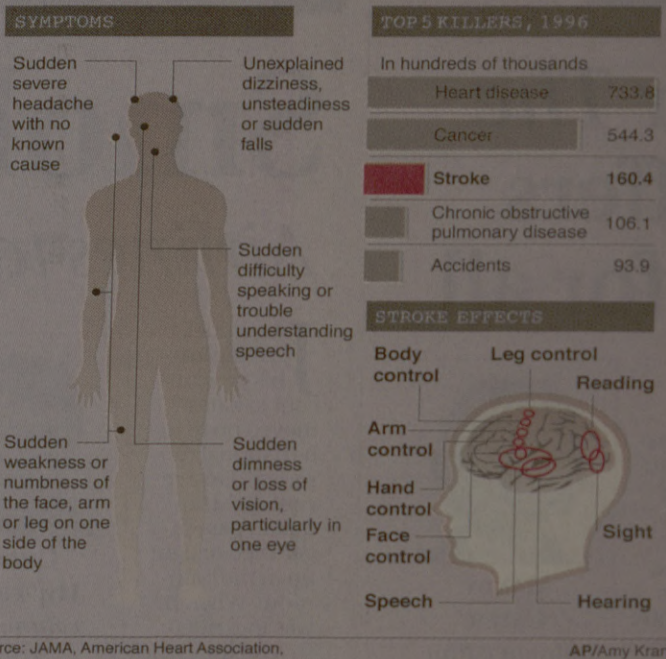
Up to 80 percent of strokes might be delayed or prevented by modifying risk factors, Pancioli said, citing previous estimates.

Until 1996, immediate treatment for strokes did not matter much, because nothing could arrest the rapid progress of damage caused by clots shutting off blood flow to the brain, which account for four-fifths of strokes. But in 1996, the clot-dissolving drug tPA became available, giving physicians their first way to arrest a stroke.

"If anyone sees the warning signs, the only thought should be to call 911 and get to an emergency room," Pancioli said.

## Strokes

Only 57 percent of 1,066 individuals surveyed by the American Medical Association were able to identify even one warning sign.



## Fraternity involved in multiple cases

KANSAS CITY, Kan. — A fraternity linked to hazing deaths at two other universities has been suspended at Kansas State University because a pledge was beaten to death.

Ernest L. Harris Jr., 22, died of a heart attack in a hospital condition Tuesday morning after a hazing ritual allegedly took place at the Kappa Alpha Psi chapter at the Manhattan campus.

Harris suffered kidney injuries that will force him to undergo surgery, Ben Cowley said at a news conference at the University of Kansas Medical Center. Such injuries are rare, and Harris could leave the hospital early next week.

Kansas State University suspended the four-member chapter of the fraternity Monday, the first step in a process that could lead to the school's expulsion of the four members. The school said the four members were involved in a hazing incident, though six to eight people may also have been involved.

Kappa Alpha Psi has been involved in hazing incidents at two other universities, including one where a student died after a beating.

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