

## Can we cut stroke in half?

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World Stroke Day, 29 October | Couple in hospital © World Stroke Organization

**In the global effort to reduce NCDs, the last thing anyone wants to see is an increase in the prevalence of a leading cause of disability and death worldwide. However that's just what the World Stroke Organization (WSO) is highlighting on 29 October, [World Stroke Day](#) [1].**

A recent analysis of the Global Burden of Disease shows that **the lifetime risk of stroke for adults aged over 25 is now 1 in 4** – that figure was 1 in 6 just ten years ago. This is largely driven by the rising prevalence of stroke in low- to middle-income countries, coupled with the increasing life expectancy of people around the world.



**1 in 4 of us will have a stroke.**

**DON'T BE  
THE ONE**



**World Stroke Day: October 29th**

[2]

Stroke comes with a high price. Every stroke patient needs access to treatment, rehabilitation. For survivors and caregivers, stroke can cost them dearly, as **the disease devastates on many levels and can combine physical disabilities and communication difficulties**, as well as significant cognitive and emotional changes. In many

cases, these already significant challenges are compounded by financial difficulties and social stigma.

### Cut stroke in half

At a rate of 1 in 4, the social cost of inaction on stroke prevention is inconceivably high. And yet **stroke is a largely preventable disease** – just ten risk factors are linked to 90% of all strokes. Most of these risk factors – such as inactivity, overweight, poor diet, smoking and alcohol – are shared with other NCDs. It is well within our grasp to decrease the global stroke burden.

While stroke has several specific clinical risk factors including hypertension, diabetes, cholesterol and other diseases of the circulatory system, the impact of these could be significantly reduced through improved community access to screening and preventive treatments.

The implementation of WHO Best Buys and universal health coverage will take us a long way. There is, however, still **a need for focused stroke prevention strategies on the ground**. So, while on World Stroke Day, the WSO is calling on individuals to be aware of their risk and to do what they can to reduce their risk of stroke, the President is also launching a WSO '[Cut Stroke in Half](#) [3]' prevention framework.

Developed by an international network of leading stroke clinicians and researchers, the strategic approach builds on strong evidence of what works in the prevention of stroke and circulatory disease.

Implementation of the WSO Cut Stroke in Half prevention framework would see governments and health systems focus their efforts towards medium- and high-risk populations with an approach that combines **improved access to risk factor screening and medication, development of a stroke-trained community health workforce, and improved public awareness, alongside the development of mobile technologies** that can support individuals as they make changes in their daily lives.

The concept is already proving attractive. In Brazil, a study to prove the efficacy of the strategy and the feasibility of implementation will start at the end of 2019, through a partnership between the Ministry of Health and the Hospital Moinhos de Vento.

WSO is working with partners to increase the number of participating countries with a view to scaling up progress and making sure that in five years' time, World Stroke Day will be sharing the news that **together we can cut stroke in half**.

### About the author

[Anita Wiseman](#) [4] is the lead for Campaigns and Partnerships for the World Stroke Organization. She specialises in global public health and health rights campaigning.

The [World Stroke Organization](#) [5] (WSO) is the world's leading organisation in the fight against stroke and a member of the NCD Alliance. It was established in October 2006 through the merger of the International Stroke Society and the World Stroke Federation with the purpose of creating one world voice for stroke. Today, WSO has more than 4000 individual members and over 60 society members from 85 different countries.

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