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Review article

Public stroke education: Current status worldwide and projects to increase awareness in the Czech Republic

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ABSTRACT

Background: Immediate response to stroke symptoms by a stroke victim or bystander is the first and most critical step for short onset to treatment time, and thus for effective acute stroke treatments. Different campaigns to increase the stroke awareness have been implemented worldwide, but their impact is unclear.

Methods: Two databases were explored for papers evaluating stroke educational campaigns. Later, three more papers evaluating campaigns targeted to children were added. All of these papers were evaluated to gain a complex picture and context to introduce Czech educational program HOBIT.

Results: Thirty-nine studies were involved into the review. All studies described the design of educational campaigns. Campaigns were conducted with advertising strategies using different types of paid or unpaid media, were targeting general adult population or specific subgroups and were designed as one-single event or long-term advertising. The measurement of the campaign outcomes either as the “stroke knowledge” or the “stroke response action” made it difficult to compare all of these campaigns in terms of efficacy together. Six studies showed that campaigns can improve population behavior in case of stroke. Twenty publications indicated that campaigns can increase the stroke knowledge, however, six of these revealed that campaigns failed to improve the behavioral intention. Two studies presented inefficient campaigns. Three campaigns targeted to children seemed to be efficient even in longer terms.

Conclusion: Educating adults about stroke is costly and its efficacy is either limited or not present. The promising solution is educating children at schools.

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Introduction

Presented study has two main parts – the first one evaluates existing papers on stroke campaigns which were conducted to improve stroke knowledge and stroke response action. The second part presents HOBIT project, which is targeted to stroke education of children. Based on existing results, it is believed that targeting school children in educational stroke campaigns could be a solution to raise public knowledge of stroke symptoms and stroke response action even in longer terms.

Cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases are the leading causes of death in developing as well as developed countries. In Europe, almost 1.1 million people die each year from stroke [40]. Although effective treatment is available [41,42], its utilization remains low [43]. The main reason for this is that many patients are excluded from treatment due to late hospital arrival. The proportion of people arriving late to hospital differs a little in different studies, for example one study [44] states that delay in presentation to emergency department beyond 3 h excluded 73.1%. Major reasons for delay included uncertain time of onset (24.2%), patients waited to see if symptoms would improve (29%), delay caused by transfer from an outlying hospital (8.9%), and inaccessibility of treating hospital (5.7%). In that respect, the presence of effective treatment does not guarantee by itself that victims of brain infarction will have the benefit of such treatment. The AHA/ASA Guidelines for the Early Management of Patients with Acute Ischemic Stroke (AHA/ASA Guidelines) emphasize that the rescue of person suffering from stroke begins at the level of early recognition of stroke symptoms by lay public. The stroke witness or the stroke patient himself/herself has to recognize the stroke symptoms and immediately activate the emergency medical services by calling Emergency Medical Services (911), i.e., 155 phone number in the Czech Republic [45]. The response to stroke is strongly impacted by the stroke knowledge of each person [46]. Therefore, widespread stroke awareness in a population is essential for effective stroke treatment – thus, public education paradigm which is much broader than patient-focused approach is applied. Because the public stroke awareness remains low [45] many national and international campaigns to increase stroke awareness have

been conducted [1–39]. The goal of all of these campaigns is to improve stroke knowledge and response to stroke symptoms in lay public. Nevertheless, the campaign methods regarding how to build stroke awareness differ, as do their outcomes and efficacy. Therefore, this study aims at exploring conducted stroke awareness campaigns and evaluate their impact on stroke knowledge and stroke response action.

Methods

Based on Web of Science and PubMed databases, which were searched on 10th May 2016 lastly, using the search criteria “stroke awareness” and “education campaign” in the title, abstract, or key words, and adding three more relevant studies that we knew about, we have explored 39 studies [1–39]. These studies evaluated the design and efficacy of extensive stroke awareness campaigns that targeted mainly the general adult population and four campaigns aimed at school children and, in some cases, their parents as well. Other material used [40–48] was added for context and other deeper knowledge and that does not come from the original database search, different key words were used.

Results

Design of stroke education campaigns

Since stroke education is rather a continuous or a repeated process, some of the campaigns have been evaluated several times as the studies included were published in different times/stages of the stroke campaign. The investigated papers show that there are many different ways how to conduct stroke awareness campaigns. Design of campaigns included communication strategy, funding, duration, and target population.

Communication of the campaigns has been conducted through mass media, leaflets or posters, physicians and emergency medical services providers, and lectures for public and multimedia programs. Several campaigns used combinations of different advertising strategies. Some studies showed

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