

The Introduction of the AHA/ASA Sharegivers Program into the Rural Community

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Purpose

The purpose of this project was to increase awareness of the currently established support group and to broaden the area in which support could be provided to survivors and their caretakers.

The project was to strengthen the existing group and create a network of stroke support groups using the Sharegivers Program from the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association. From geographical information received from a survey it was found that this network needed to incorporate a large area from Messena New York, to Newport Vermont, and further south to Bennington Vermont, a total of seven Sharegivers support groups would need to be formed to support the patients treated at Fletcher Allen Health Care.

Target Population

The target population was to start with the 290 patients that received treatment at Fletcher Allen Health Care for their stroke from January 2007 to January 2008. The patients came from a distance of up to 150 miles from the facility. Our target population was to encompass both survivors and their caretakers.

Specific Aim of the Project

The Sharegivers Program educates survivors and their caretakers and gives them the ability to return to their communities and be able to talk with other survivors and their caregivers about their stroke experience. Reaching out to those in the communities will help spread the support for those that have been affected by stroke. Educational classes are held monthly for all those who are interested, many of these classes have guest speakers. The creation of a stroke support group website is underway. This website will list an educational calendar (to include handouts being used for monthly sessions), available resources, stroke research available in the area, as well as basic stroke information. We have been advertising the support group on the Fletcher Allen.org/stroke website. The website will also post other sites participating in the Sharegivers Program. We will hold biannual meetings to discuss the challenges of our groups as well as share our successes.

How Goals Were Accomplished

A survey was developed to seek out interest in the program. 290 surveys were mailed out, and 90 responses came back. We assessed the needs of the immediate community and started our work there. Private donations for the mailings and post office box were obtained. The process of the development of this group is done by volunteer time by a physical therapist and a nurse, with limited resources. The AHA/ASA provided the Sharegivers books.

Fletcher Allen Health Care Stroke Catchment Area



Stroke Group Educational Calendar

- January- Coping with Stress following Stroke
Presented by FAHC social worker
- February- Financial Impacts following Stroke
Presented by FAHC social worker
- March- Ask the Neurologist
Presented by Mark Gorman, MD
- April- Communication Strategies for Successful Relationships
Presented by FAHC social worker
- May- Stroke Awareness- General Information Night
Presented by Melissa Lowrey, NP
- June- Aphasia
Presented by Mike Cannizarro
- July- Emotions following Stroke
Presented by Owen Drudge
- August- Rehab following Stroke
Presented by Becky Louko, PT
- September- Returning to Driving following Stroke
Presented by Miriam Monahan, OTR/L
- October- Vocational Rehabilitation
Presented by Mark Ciciola from VOC rehab
- November- Dietary Considerations following Stroke
Presented by FAHC dietician
- December- Pot Luck Social

Outcomes Measured

Our outcome measurement thus far has been the response to our survey and the attendance at our local group.

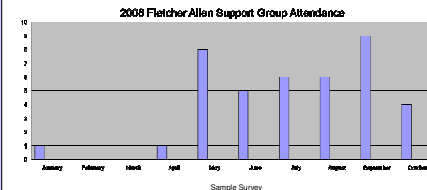
- 25 people who are interested in receiving a quarterly newsletter by email
- Another 30 are interested in quarterly mailings.
- We have also seen an increase in our local stroke support group attendance from 0 to 7
- Another 22 people would like to join a group closer to them.

We are now in the progress of finding local people in the outlying communities who wish to participate as a support group leader.

Return on Investment

Living in a rural area where public transportation is not available in all areas is a big barrier for our population. The stroke population that we treat at Fletcher Allen services is widespread making it difficult for people to attend meetings. With the introduction of the website, emailings, mailings, and actual groups our ability to reach out to more of our patients is growing. The stroke survivors and their caretakers will be getting the support and education they need to maximize their recovery post stroke through our outreaching support group efforts.

Here is a testimonial from one of stroke support group attendees: Below is a quote from Mr. Burns' wife, Mr. Burns is a severely aphasic stroke survivor:
"The stroke support group enables him to interact with others without feeling uncomfortable. They give him the opportunity to try to express his thoughts, even though it takes him longer." "There is something to be gained by being together with other stroke survivors."



Sample Survey

In order to better serve our community we are developing a more active stroke support group. We would like to ask you for your input into its development. If you would please complete this brief survey and return it in the envelope provided your input will be appreciated.

1. Are you interested in joining an educational/support stroke group (if no, skip to Q7)? Yes or No

2. Is there a day of the week or time that is more convenient for you (circle most convenient)? Yes or No
Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday

3. Please circle time block of day most convenient (group will likely only last for one hour):
8am-10am 10am-12pm 12pm-2pm 2pm-4pm 4pm-6pm

4. Location: Currently the group is being held at Fanny Allen Campus, is this convenient for you? Yes or No. If no, where would be a more convenient place for you? Place

5. Do you use public transportation to get to your appointments? Yes or No
If yes please circle type: SSTA Bus Taxi Drive self Family member

6. Would you have someone accompany you during the meeting? Yes or No
Child/Children Spouse Significant Other Friend Parent

7. We are developing an internet web page with information about stroke, resources, meeting calendars etc. Do you have access to a computer? Yes or No
Would you be interested in receiving information by this method? Yes or No
Would you (or someone close) access a web page to get this type of info? Yes or No

8. Would you be willing to talk with other people who have had a stroke about your experiences? Yes or No

9. We are thinking of having a quarterly newsletter. Would you be interested in receiving a newsletter? Yes or No

10. Would you like to be informed when this group is formed? Yes or No

By mail (please write in address):
By email (please write in email address):
By phone (please supply us with a phone number):
Any comments or ideas - Please write in below or on the back (or e-mail Sharon Kenney at sharon.kenney@uvm.edu. Thank you so much for your help in building this support group!



Vermont's Academic Medical Center