

May is Heat Stroke Awareness Month

By GUS BILIRAKIS

Every 40 seconds, someone in America has a stroke. In fact, it is the third leading cause of deaths in the nation. Each year, during the month of May, Americans band together, not only to share their support in the fight against stroke, but also raise awareness of how it can be treated, and more importantly, prevented.

It is crucially important to be aware of the symptoms of stroke, since every second that a victim does not receive the help they need the more brain damage they incur. Symptoms are typically sudden and include: numbness in the face, arm, or leg; confusion; trouble speaking and understanding; trouble seeing; trouble with coordination and balance; and severe headache.

If you or someone you know experiences these symptoms, call 9-1-1 immediately for emergency assistance, keeping in mind that protest and denial are common reactions from the person experiencing the symptoms. Although several new stroke therapies now exist, they are only effective within a three-hour time frame of symptom onset.

While swift action is necessary in the event of stroke symptoms, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention also lists several preventative measures that can be taken against stroke. These include:

- Prevention and control of high blood pressure.
- Prevention and control of diabetes
- Not smoking
- Prevention and control of high cholesterol
- Limiting alcohol consumption
- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Exercising regularly
- Limiting salt, saturated fat, and cholesterol intake in ones diet

I also will continue working in Congress to ensure that stroke prevention and awareness programs receive adequate funding. In that regard, I supported a budget increase for the National Institutes Health and its Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke for the current Fiscal Year. I also supported H.R. 477, the Stroke Treatment and Ongoing Prevention Act, when it passed the House on March 27, 2007. H.R. 477, which would strengthen education, prevention, and treatment programs relating to stroke, has been referred to the Senate where it is awaiting further legislative action.

I encourage you to share this life-saving information with your family and friends. Also, I encourage you to visit the American Heart Association's website for more information and other helpful resources at www.americanheart.org.