

# THE HINDU

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## Act fast when someone has a stroke

Special Correspondent

**GUNTUR:** Strokes are the cause for largest number of deaths in the world with 60 lakh people falling prey to this. This year's theme to improve awareness among the common man, on World Stroke Day to be observed worldwide on October 29, is 'What Can I Do?'.

According to World Stroke Organization everyone can do something: learn to recognise symptoms and take action, learn to recognise the risk factors, said neurologist P. Vijaya of Ankineedu Stroke Unit of Lalitha Super Specialities Hospital here on Monday.

A series of programmes ahead of the stroke day were being organised by the Andhra Pradesh chapter, and as part of that the Stroke Unit here had been organising programmes from Friday last.

All aspects of stroke are being explained and discussed with interactive programmes, free BP check and stroke risk assessment was done by volunteers, she explained. Advice was being given for primary prevention of stroke. A stroke helpline 9440808624 with a help desk was being maintained on the premises of Lalitha Super Specialities Hospital with physician, physiotherapist, dietician and social workers rendering services.

### High rate

World Stroke Organization puts the number of deaths due to stroke second only heart disease as the world's leading cause of death.

However, if basic preventive measures were not taken, the number of people predicted to die from stroke would rise by another million over the next six years, the organisation predicts, the doctor

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Stroke was leading cause of premature death and disability. There has been significant increase of stroke incidence in low and middle income groups in the past four decades. Primary prevention of stroke, consisting of control of risk factors, healthy lifestyle and regular health check ups could have major impact on stroke burden.

Once a stroke starts the damage spreads in minutes, more the delay worse the prognosis. The average window period (onset to hospitalisation time) was 10 -24 hours! While the best effects of treatments was within 3 hours, Dr. Vijaya opined. The lack of awareness about stroke symptoms was delaying treatment for the majority of patients.

### FAST test

A simple 'FAST' test was used world wide for public education. F stands for drooping of face, A stands for arm weakness, S stands for slurring/ lack of speech and T stands for time - time to get quick treatment. If this message was spread the delay in treatment could be minimized. Stroke was a treatable and preventable disease. Effective clot busting drugs can be used within the first three to four-and-a-half hours to minimise the disability according to the guidelines of World Stroke Organization and Indian Stroke Association, Dr Vijaya concludes.