

A systematic review and synthesis of global stroke guidelines – lay summary.

What is a stroke?

A stroke happens when the blood supply to part of the brain is cut off, killing brain cells. There are two types of strokes. An ischaemic stroke is caused by a blockage cutting off the blood supply to the brain. A haemorrhagic stroke is caused by a blood vessel in the brain bursting causing bleeding into the brain.

What are stroke guidelines?

Stroke guidelines are recommendations that healthcare professionals follow to help them diagnose and treat a stroke. They help healthcare professionals provide the best care for people who have had a stroke.

How are stroke guidelines made?

Stroke guidelines are made by looking at all the best available research that has been done in stroke and making recommendations based on this research.

What do stroke guidelines include?

Stroke guidelines include recommendations on the diagnosis of stroke, the best treatments for when a stroke happens, and the best treatments to support recovery after stroke. They also include recommendations on how to stop another stroke happening.

What did this study look at?

In this study a group of people who study strokes asked other experts to gather up all the stroke recommendations made in the last ten years. They wanted to make sure that they had all the best recommendations in one place. They looked at 200 sets of recommendations published since 2011 and picked out the most important ones.

They also looked at how good the recommendations were by using a tool called AGREE II, to make sure they were helpful.

What did this study find?

It is important for a team of doctors, nurses and therapists to work together to take care of the person who had a stroke. This is called a multi-disciplinary team.

Many of the recommendations for treating a stroke caused by a blocked blood vessel were similar. The recommendations include treatments to break up clots (clot-busting medication) or to remove clots (mechanical clot removal) and say who can have these treatments to make sure they are safe and effective.

For a stroke caused by bleeding into the brain, the recommendations say that it is important to control the person's blood pressure and stop certain medications.

To keep people from having another stroke, there are different treatments that can help, like taking medicine to lower high blood pressure and high lipids, blood thinners, or sometimes having surgery. It is also important to exercise, eat healthy, stop smoking, and lose weight if you have excess weight.

Rehabilitation after stroke can help people with recovery. There are special doctors and therapists who can help with things like speaking, moving, and doing things like they used to do before the stroke. It's important for these people to work together and for the person who had a stroke to get help as soon as possible.

There were no strong recommendations about some longer term problems after stroke including fatigue and apathy, which are very important to patients.

What is going to happen because of this study?

The group of people who looked at the recommendations found that some of the recommendations were repeated a lot and that some important things were left out of the recommendations. This information helps researchers decide what to study in the future.

They want to share these recommendations with people all over the world and make sure that everyone follows them. They also want to find ways to make the recommendations better and easier to make in the future. They hope that following these recommendations will help people who have had a stroke to get better faster and stay healthy.