NEWS RELEASE

Global Anti-Stroke Organization Honors Mothers and Sisters on International Women’s Day

GENEVA | 8 March 2012 – Today, on the occasion of International Women’s Day, the World Stroke Organization (WSO) pays tribute to women around the world who have survived stroke and to those dedicating their lives to conquering the disease. Stroke is the principal cause of long-term disability irrespective of age, gender, ethnicity or country.

Women represent the foundation of most societies. They are our mothers, sisters, grandmothers and partners. And, women, more often than not, bear the responsibility of being the primary care giver for a family member or friend recovering from a stroke. As WSO president Prof. Bo Norving poignantly notes “it is high time that women who are on the frontlines of providing stroke care and support are recognized. They remain the unsung heroes in the battle to overcome stroke. I would also like to applaud and thank my peers who are valiantly leading the fight against stroke in their respective countries.”

As Dr. Erin Lalor, the chief executive officer of the National Stroke Foundation (NSF) in Australia explains “more women than men suffer a stroke. International Women’s Day is not only a time to celebrate the important role that women have in supporting those affected but also an opportunity to remind them to take the necessary steps to reduce their own risk by looking after themselves, she adds. In keeping with the “1 in 6” World Stroke Campaign message, I am asking women from around the world to talk to 6 people about stroke and especially to learn to recognize its warning signs which are:

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden trouble speaking or understanding language
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes, or having double vision
- Sudden trouble walking and loss of balance
- Sudden vertigo
- Sudden severe headache with no cause”

According to the World Health Organization, 3.2 million women globally die from stroke every year. Stroke is the second leading cause of death for people above the age of 60, and the fifth for people aged 15 to 59.

There are 15 million people worldwide who suffer a stroke each year. Every other second, an adult or a child, a man or a woman, old or young, suffers a stroke. One in five women as opposed to one in six in men is at risk for stroke. Women account for about 60 percent of stroke deaths. Of every 10 deaths from stroke, six occur in women and is largely attributed to a longer life expectancy than men.
The highest rates for stroke are in the older age groups. Women tend to also have worse outcomes than men as indicated by more severe disability and an increased likelihood of institutionalization.

The WSO launched its global advocacy campaign on World Stroke Day 2010 to scale-up global awareness about stroke. The campaign, called “1 in 6” aims to disseminate life-saving information and share knowledge about actions and lifestyle behaviors that could avert the assault of stroke. The theme “1 in 6” was aptly selected to reflect today’s reality that one in six people worldwide will have a stroke in their lifetime.

In close partnership with the Indian Stroke Association, WSO works with Bollywood film actress Rani Mukerji in helping to raise awareness about the disease in India.

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About the World Stroke Organization – The World Stroke Organization (WSO) was established in October 2006. Its mission is to provide access to stroke care, promote research and knowledge by (1) promoting prevention and care for persons with stroke and vascular dementia; (2) fostering the best standards of practice; (3) educating, in collaboration with other international, public, and private organizations; and (4) facilitating clinical research. With individual and organizational members worldwide, WSO is the global voice for stroke. WSO is an international NGO in official relations with the World Health Organization (WHO). Prof. Bo Norrving, of Sweden, is the current president.