Global stroke leader calls for urgency on World Stroke Day

GENEVA | 29 October 2013 – Today is World Stroke Day. The World Stroke Organization (WSO), with its members in nearly 100 countries, is demanding that the fight against stroke be given urgency and the highest attention by national governments, especially those in low and middle-income countries where the incidence of stroke is rapidly rising. Public-private partnerships are being encouraged whenever possible in further strengthening the global response to the silent stroke epidemic.

There are an estimated 16 million people who have a stroke each year with nearly 6 million of them losing their lives to the disease. One in six people will have stroke in their lifetime. In fact, stroke is responsible for more deaths annually than those attributed to AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria put together. Stroke is also the leading cause of long-term disability irrespective of age, sex, ethnicity or country.

Speaking from Hanoi, Vietnam where he is meeting with senior health and government officials at the official commemoration of World Stroke Day this year, WSO President Prof. Stephen Davis highlights that stroke is one of the greatest public health challenges facing the world today. “Stroke is the second commonest cause of death and the leading cause of long-term disability worldwide”, he explains. “These numbers are more than facts and figures. They represent real lives. They are our mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, friends - people we care about.” The social, emotional and financial burden of stroke is simply huge and devastating” he implores. Referring to the situation in Southeast Asia, “there are more stroke survivors in this part of the world than in any other”, Davis points out.

This year’s theme is “Because I care… “. It was selected as it can easily be adapted to all cultures. The slogan attempts to address prevailing misinformation about the disease. The WSO, for example, is stressing to the general public that contrary to widely-held beliefs, stroke can happen at any age and at anytime. Caregivers and the role of family and friends - as those in the frontlines providing the essential supportive care and support – are being celebrated. Caregivers are the conduits between the stroke community and the general public in correcting misinformation as they know first-hand what the reality is around stroke.

Men, women, young people and even children, are all at risk for the disease. “Because I care…“ is aimed at educating people about the best ways to minimize stroke, facilitate access to the best possible treatment, care and support along the pathway to recovery. The key messages are:

Because I care...

- I want you to know the facts about stroke
- I will work with you to break down the myths around stroke
I want you to learn how to minimize your risk of stroke
I want you to have access to the best possible treatment
I will ensure that you receive quality treatment, care and support
I will be with you every step of the way towards your full recovery

Prof. Davis will take these key messages with him when he meets with senior health officials, government representatives and key opinion leaders in Yangon, Myanmar (Burma) immediately after World Stroke Day commemorations in both Hanoi and subsequently in Ho Chi Minh City where he is the keynote speaker at the 4th Scientific Congress of the Vietnam Stroke Association.

The World Stroke Organization has invited over 60 general practitioner physicians from across Myanmar to participate and receive training on its “Cardinal Principles of Stroke Treatment” program, conducted by the WSO in many parts of the world, with a particular focus on low and middle-income regions. “This ABC of Stroke program covers the key principles of acute stroke management, including rapid diagnosis, hospital transfer and assessment, acute treatment, management of post-stroke complications, early mobilization and rehabilitation. We will particularly emphasize the importance of developing stroke units in Myanmar, proven to reduce mortality and improve outcomes, without additional costs to the healthcare system,” explains Prof. Davis.

A principal activity of the World Stroke Campaign this year has been the development of a Global Stroke Bill of Rights. While similar documents exist in some countries, there is no “global” version. The objective of this WSO initiative is to develop a stroke survivor/carer Bill of Rights, written by stroke survivors and carers based on consultation with other stroke survivors and carers from around the world. It will consider survivor priorities across the continuum from prevention to acute care, rehabilitation and long-term support. The document will officially be launched at the 9th World Stroke Congress in Istanbul, Turkey in October 2014.

About the World Stroke Organization
The World Stroke Organization (WSO) was established in October 2006. WSO’s mission is to reduce the global burden of stroke through prevention, treatment and long-term care. As the lead international body for stroke, WSO aims to accomplish its mission by:

- Fostering the best standards of practice
- Increasing stroke awareness among the population and among health professionals
- Preventing subtle cerebrovascular disease leading to gait disorders, imbalance, vascular cognitive impairment and behavioral changes
- Influencing policies for stroke prevention and improved health services
Contact
Jose Julio Divino, MPH
Campaigns and Communications
World Stroke Organization
Geneva, Switzerland
Tel: +41 22 906 9123
Email: campaigns@world-stroke.org
www.worldstrokecampaign.org

• Providing education in collaboration with public and private organizations
• Facilitating stroke research advocacy for people with stroke
• Fostering the development of systems and organizations for long-term care and support of stroke survivors and their families.

With individual and organizational members worldwide, including stroke support groups, WSO is the global voice for stroke. WSO is the only international stroke NGO in official relations with the World Health Organization (WHO). Prof. Stephen Davis, MD, FRCP, Edin FRACP, from Melbourne, Australia, is the President of the World Stroke Organization.