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## Did You Know That He(She) Had A Stroke?

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## DID YOU KNOW THAT HE(SHE) HAD A STROKE?

Did you know that he (she) had a stroke? The aforementioned, menacing question is being asked in every city, every social circle and every family, every day. Most recently, this haunting question has been asked about me, 76 years-old, 225 pounds, 6'4," and by all appearances in great health, but I indeed, had a stroke. I had a stroke on the third day in 2019, and I am writing this article because my experience with my stroke and to increase the awareness of my community to the its dangers and to provide some facts and some precautions as it relates to strokes. I am hoping that this article will increase the knowledge and the dialogue, within our community, about strokes and that maybe it will serve as an aid to prevention and give encouragement to others who may have suffered a stroke or are suffering from the effects.

First of all, let me open by saying that since my stroke, I have been in intensive rehabilitation, with miraculous improvements and God willing, hope to surface and return to my work in the first part of February. I surely want to give encouragement from my gained experience and knowledge. I am the beneficiary of prayer, and the expertise of a vast medical community. Strokes do not have to be totally debilitating, and your life is not over after a stroke.

### Let me just share with you some facts about strokes:

- Stroke is the third leading cause of death in the United States.
- More than 140,000 people die each year from stroke in the United States
- Stroke is the leading cause of serious, long-term disability in the United States. Causing more people to have to quit their jobs, and possibly need to have a full-time care taker or live in a nursing home.
- Each year, approximately 795,000 people suffer a stroke
- Strokes can and do occur at **ANY** age. Nearly one fourth of strokes occur in people under the age of 65
- Average age in the state of Nebraska is 42
- Stroke death rates are higher for African-Americans than for whites, even at younger ages
- On average, someone in the United States has a stroke every 40 seconds
- The statistics are staggering—in fact, African-Americans are more impacted by stroke than any other racial groups within the American population. African-Americans are twice as likely to die from stroke as Caucasians and their rate of first strokes is almost double that of Caucasians
  - Strokes in this population tend to occur earlier in life. And as survivors, African-Americans are more likely to become disabled and experience difficulties with daily living and activities
  - For men between the ages of 45 and 54, the risk of ischemic stroke — the most prevalent type of stroke, which is caused by a blood clot that blocks an artery — is three times higher in African-Americans than in Caucasians. I learned in speaking with several health care providers, that in dealing with strokes, there is information that says African-American men need to be more trusting and conversational, and more aggressive, when dealing with medical professionals, with seeking information and preventing our own strokes
  - For African-Americans between the ages of 20 and 44, the risk of stroke is nearly two-and-a-half times higher than it is for Caucasians

- According to the National Stroke Association, stroke or heart disease will claim the lives of half of all African-American women
- African-Americans have more severe strokes that are also more disabling

Here are some additional facts about strokes:

- Stroke happen to all ages; it is no longer an old person’s disease
- 80% of all strokes can be prevented
- Stroke is the 5<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death and the leading cause of disability
- Over 800,000 occur each year

**Below are listed some of the causes of strokes:**

1. High levels of Bad Cholesterol
2. High Blood Pressure in which African Americans are 45% of Black males and 46% of Black Females have high blood pressure. It is the number one risk factor for stroke for African-Americans
3. Diabetes and lack of control of our sugar level
4. Stress, lack of proper rest, alcohol, drug use, and any various combinations of all the above listed

**The following are some myths about stroke:**

MYTH: Stroke cannot be prevented.	FACT: Up to 80 percent of strokes are preventable. With modification of risk factors: High blood pressure, diabetes, smoking, obesity, drug use and high cholesterol
MYTH: There is no treatment for stroke.	FACT: At any sign of stroke call 9-1-1- immediately. Treatment may be available. Time is the most important thing when a stroke occurs. Every minute we wait we lose 1.9 million brain cells – we never gain these back
MYTH: Stroke only affects the elderly.	FACT: Stroke can happen to anyone at any time. Strokes are no longer an “old person” disease
MYTH: Stroke happens in the heart.	FACT: Stroke is a "brain attack". It effects your brain by either having a blood clot that doesn’t allow the blood to flow throughout your vessels or a vessel that burst causing bleeding in the brain.
MYTH: Stroke recovery only happens for the first few months after a stroke.	FACT: Stroke recovery is a lifelong process. Depending on where you stroke is located, how large the stroke is and how long you waited for treatment can affect your recovery.
MYTH: Strokes are rare.	FACT: There are nearly 7 million stroke survivors in the U.S. Stroke is the 5 <sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in the U.S.
MYTH: Strokes are not hereditary.	FACT: Family history of stroke increases your chance for stroke.

MYTH: If stroke symptoms go away, you don't have to see a doctor.

FACT: Temporary stroke symptoms are called transient ischemic attacks (TIA). They are warning signs prior to actual stroke and need to be taken seriously.

### **In summary,**

I am hoping that this article will provide information, education, maybe even prevention and understanding, for our community, as it relates to strokes. I will say going forward my personal experience has been that we have a vast amount of expertise and support systems for strokes, in and around north Omaha. Treatment may require with at least Physical Therapy (PT), Occupational Therapy (OT) and Speech Therapy. I required all. My personal experience is with the Immanuel in-patient Rehabilitation Center, but I recommend that you carefully evaluate your options as to hospitals, rehab and recovery services. I should also mention that Charles Drew Health Center has aggressive stroke programs and I recommend that you consider them as a resource. For one, review their "Fathers for a Lifetime" Program," and website (<https://charlesdrew.com>), Also be aware of "Together to End Stroke Ambassadors" , President Theola Cooper. I also firmly want to commend Pastor Portia Cavitt, Clair United Methodist Church, who is an aggressive advocate for stroke information and prevention and collaborated with me on this article. My final comment is that let's together increase the awareness in our community about Strokes, because we need all our people assets at 100%.

**\*\*\*Statistics and facts are from the National Stroke Association\*\*\***