

Grandma's stroke confuses the family



Q. My grandmother has had a stroke. Her doctors have been very patient in explaining what has happened to her, but our family still is somewhat confused. What does happen when a person has a stroke?

A. Often called a cerebral vascular accident, a stroke happens when the normal flow of blood to the brain is interrupted or actually stopped. This causes damage to either the right or the left side of the brain.

What then often occurs are physical limitations on the opposite side of the body.

For example, if the right side of the brain is damaged by the stroke, paralysis may occur on the left side of the body and vice versa.

If the stroke is severe the brain area where the flow of blood has been interrupted or stopped may be permanently damaged. As a result, impairments in speaking, walking or reading may be evident.

If the brain should swell after the stroke, there may be additional functional impairments.

When a right-sided stroke occurs, there may be behavioral changes including the loss of language interaction, thinking and reasoning, and visual and reading skills, as well as disorientation in regard to time, place and familiar people.

There may be difficulty in remembering certain recent events and problems with speech and swallowing.

A left-sided stroke may result in the loss of verbal, listening and writing skills. Often, speech and swallowing becomes difficult, and visual and reading skills are affected.

Recovery time varies. Usually there are three general phases. The first is spontaneous recovery. For six months following the initial stroke, the brain experiences a natural healing process. Unfortunately not everyone experiences this phase.

Should this spontaneous action occur, the individual becomes more alert, and there are noticeable physical changes.

The second phase, which usually

begins while the brain is still in the process of healing, is called treatment-induced recovery.

A therapist works with the patient and helps him or her to relearn the skills lost by the stroke.

The last phase, also accomplished through a trained therapist, helps the person perform old skills in new ways.

For example, if the right arm has been injured, the therapist will help the patient to learn to do more tasks with the left arm.

Another common stroke symptom is a decreased control of emotions. Anger, depression, crying, swearing and laughter may occur in inappropriate or sudden outbursts.

The patient usually has little if any control over these emotions. And these, too, will improve as the stroke victim does.

The family can play a vital role during someone's illness and rehabilitation. Not only can the family provide moral support, but it also can help the individual with activities learned during treatment programs.

Therapist Theresa Louise-Bender Pape and Maureen T. Stemmen, who are affiliated with the Rehabilitation Network and Total Rehabilitation, offer the following suggestions as to how families can help a member who has suffered a stroke:

- Listen carefully to what the patient communicates.
- Allow the patient ample time to respond to questions and conversation.
- Allow the patient ample time to complete his or her thoughts — "putting words in their mouth" — will add to their frustration.
- When in doubt, assume the patient can understand everything you are saying.
- Stimulate the patient through sound, sight and smell.
- Share activities you can do with the patient, reading aloud, looking at family photos, discussing daily events and family life, participating in familiar games and watching television together.

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Spaulding from page 1C

ing families and staff who are special guests at the "Families Are Golden" fund-raising event at the Westin Hotel in Detroit.

At the party, more than 200 1992 Michigan Olympic athletes and their families will be honored by Chuck Daly, former Pistons and 1992 Olympics basketball coach. (For ticket information about the event call 443-7080.)

Being a parent

Happy to be parenting, and impressed with the child-welfare work of the Spaulding agency, Turner said, "I recommend it to people to look into. It's a lot of pleasure. It has its ups and downs, but it has a lot of pluses." Spaulding finds homes for many Detroit children — those with disabilities and older African-American children who have been abused, neglected or abandoned.

"My childhood was pretty bad," Mac recalled. He has been in foster homes since the age of 5. "Every

time I went to a different home, people told me different things. I was kind of confused." Referring to Turner, Mac said, "He's trying to straighten me out."

The soft-spoken man responded, "His self-esteem. That was his biggest problem, and not knowing what tomorrow would bring. He's always been fun-loving and funny and friendly, but by being confused, he used to get into a lot of trouble."

When Mac was asked what he liked most about Turner, he took a long time to reply, then said, "He's there when I need him."

Michelle Richardson, the Spaulding foster care worker who sat in on the interview, said, "He's emulating a lot of Mike's professional image. He's gone to work with him a few times."

"People will show him things they're 'designing,'" Turner explained. Mac said he got a chance to work on the computer.

Turner designs components for the GM Tech Center, Inland Fisher

Guide Division, in Warren. He also has two part-time selling jobs, as an Amway representative and selling a line of jewelry called Our Secret.

"I'm helping him start his business — New Line Enterprise," Mac said proudly. Turner explained that in the future, they may become partners in retail sales, maybe jewelry.

A role model

Delighted to be a role model for Mac, Turner said, "He's carrying a briefcase now. I just got him a pocket telephone book today."

"And this watch," said Mac, showing it off on his wrist.

"He's starting to take a lot of my good traits," Turner continued. "He's into his clothes now." Mac said that before he wore mostly jogging suits, but now has overalls, and T-shirts and shorts sets.

Turner said, "When he wears a tie, he looks like a little businessman." Mac challenged it won't be long before he's not so "little," and

catches up in height to Turner. Mac is now about five feet seven, so he's got a ways to go to reach Turner's six feet two.

Born in Detroit, Mac transferred from McMichael Middle School to Nolan Middle School in Detroit when he went to live with Turner. After the move to Southfield, Mac was enrolled in Levy School.

When Mac grows up, he wants to be a toy designer. He would like to try out all the new toys. "I think that's the best job in the world," he said.

Foster care worker Michelle Richardson recalled that soon after the man and boy first got together, "There was quite a bond there, between Exco and Mike." She also pointed out, "From what I've seen they talk a lot. They're honest with each other."

Turner said, "He's a comedian too. He likes to keep people laughing." Mac replied solemnly, "It's a gift. And if you don't like it, you don't have to listen."

Book is a help in providing quality care

BY REBECCA HAYNES
STAFF WRITER

Making a decision on long-term care for a loved one may be one of the most difficult decisions a family faces.

But some of the burden has been lifted from concerned shoulders, thanks to a new book put out by Citizens for Better Care. "The Michigan Long-Term Care Reader" 1992 edition helps to answer questions on how to choose a nursing home, home for the aged or adult foster care program, as well as explaining the differences among the three.

"This is the first time we've actually published a book," said CBC assistant director Bob Gordon. "For years, we've been publishing booklets that are essentially the different chapters of what is now the book."

"It just kind of dawned on us that together this would make an excellent book on long-term care."

Although Gordon said there are many publications on long-term care, others provide national information but can't get specific about programs, rules or regulations in Michigan. "The Michigan Long-Term Care Reader" does, he said.

"A lot of professionals are telling us that to have all of this information between two covers is invaluable," he said. "The regulations we refer to are changing all the time. We update the material, and where

ever it's at next January, that will be the 1993 edition."

Topics such as Medicare and Medicaid, long-term care insurance, discrimination, admissions contracts, guardianship and options, dementia care and hospital discharge planning are some of the other areas touched on in the book. Readers will also learn how to appeal official decisions, what facilities are and aren't required to provide, how to get better care and how to file complaints about bad care.

"One of the nice things about the 'Reader' is that it contains information for people across the income spectrum," Gordon said. "For people on the lower end, it talks about Medicare eligibility, and for middle-income families it gives information about when you can become eligible for Medicaid."

"And long-term care insurance, which is usually associated with people in the upper levels, is also in there."

"We printed 5,000 copies and 1,000 have been sold," Gordon said. "They're in Borders and they should be in Waldenbooks very soon. You can also find them in other independent bookstores in Rochester, Livonia, Southfield and Birmingham."

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Citizens for Better Care

Next year's edition will include a section on in-home care, he said, adding that the '92 edition just touched on this much-needed option.

Founded in 1963 by the Detroit City Council, Citizens for Better Care was originated as a group to monitor nursing homes. In the early 1970s, the Detroit program became part of a pilot federal care ombudsman project, later signed into law by then President Richard Nixon, Gordon said.

"Basically, we're an office where people can get questions on long-term care answered, and can have their problems addressed," he said. CBC has groups involved with the Department of Health and the Department of Social Services. They fight Medicaid discrimination

In nursing homes and are currently involved in legislation that would increase staff at nursing homes.

"We have 1,200 members and 100 volunteer advocates," Gordon said, adding that each volunteer is assigned to visit a specific nursing home a few hours each week. "We now have six offices statewide and 18 staff ombudsmen."

CBC statistics show that 75,000 Michigan residents enter nursing homes, homes for the aged or foster homes each year.

If you can't find the book in your local bookstore, it can be ordered by calling 1-800-333-3421.

For more information, call at (800) 833-3548.

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