

## **Stroke Kills 3000 People Each Year**

Stroke is one of the most common adult neurological diseases, and is a major source of morbidity and disability. It is also the third leading cause of death. In Hong Kong, more than 25,000 people are admitted to public hospitals because of stroke annually, i.e. one in every 200 people suffer from stroke, and more than 3,000 died of it annually in the past years.

Stroke is not a cerebrovascular ‘accident’ but is a serious consequence of cerebrovascular disease. It results from insufficient supply of oxygen and nutrient to brain tissues. The nerve cells will die, and there is no replacement of nerve cells. Therefore the nervous system will deteriorate and then affect the normal functions of the body. The major types of stroke are ischaemic stroke and haemorrhagic stroke. Mimics of stroke include brain tumor, encephalitis, drug intoxication, complicated migraine, brain abscess and hysteria.

The major risk factors of stroke are hypertension, hypercholesterolaemia diabetes mellitus, atrial fibrillation, cigarette smoking and extracranial carotid artery stenosis. In general, male has a greater chance of suffering from stroke than female as female hormone can reduce the rate of vascular hardening.

The damage of stroke to a patient can be very serious, which includes blindness, language impairment, slurred speech, difficulty in swallowing, weakness, unsteadiness, spinning sensation, double vision, sensory loss, and urinary or bowel incontinence.

Therefore, precautionary measures should be taken to prevent stroke. When you feel giddy, experience limb weakness or slurring of speech, you must consult your doctor for the possibility of having stroke. In addition, people with high blood pressure should perform check-up and do exercise regularly. Of course, cessation of smoking and avoidance of obesity are also important. Effective stroke prevention can minimize the occurrence of other fatal and non-fatal cardiovascular events.