



Stroke Survivors Association of Ottawa Encourages Ontario Government to Provide Those at Risk of the Most Debilitating Strokes with Access to the Best Treatment

Ottawa, Ontario – Monday, July 18th, 2011 – The Stroke Survivors Association of Ottawa is calling on the Ontario Government to follow the recommendation of the Canadian Expert Drug Advisory Committee by adding Pradax (dabigatran etexilate) to the provincial formulary. In October 2010, Health Canada approved Pradax for the prevention of stroke and systemic embolism in patients with a heart condition known as atrial fibrillation, or AF.

“The effects of stroke can be devastating and strokes caused by AF are often the most debilitating of all,” said Janet McTaggart, Executive Director of the Stroke Survivors Association of Ottawa. “Ontarians deserve access to the best and most effective treatments that can help prevent strokes.”

In Ontario, there are approximately 100,000 patients living with AF, a common and serious condition that causes the heart to beat irregularly. After age 55, the incidence of AF doubles with each decade of life and if not managed properly, can lead to severe and debilitating strokes.ⁱ In fact, people with AF are three to five times more at risk of having a stroke than those without AF and are twice as likely to die from one.ⁱ For those who survive a stroke, the disabilities can be significant and can include, paralysis, loss of speech, effects on memory and thought processes.ⁱⁱ AF is currently costing the Ontario health care system approximately \$700 million annually.ⁱⁱⁱ

For the past 20 years, warfarin has been the only treatment available to people with AF to reduce their risk of clotting and stroke. Warfarin interacts with some foods and drugs, and patients taking it must have their blood tested regularly to ensure it is working effectively. Research has shown that Pradax is as effective as warfarin in preventing stroke in patients with atrial fibrillation and it is much easier for patients to take.^{iv}

Additionally, the Canadian Cardiovascular Society recently updated their Guidelines to include Pradax as either the treatment of choice for preventing strokes in AF patients or as an equal option to warfarin (depending on the patient’s level of risk).

“Another factor the Ontario Government should consider while reviewing this file is the fact that many AF patients choose not to go on warfarin due to the challenges of being on that medication – thereby leaving themselves at increased risk of stroke,” adds McTaggart.

About Stroke Survivors Association of Ottawa

Stroke Survivors Association of Ottawa (SSAO) provides stroke survivors, their families, caregivers, professionals and the general public with a wide variety of support services, community re-engagement, advocacy, education and other programs. As well, SSAO has connections to many Ottawa and surrounding area stroke supports.

For more information, please contact:

Janet McTaggart
Executive Director
Stroke Survivors Association of Ottawa
strokesurvivorsofottawa@gmail.com
613-237-0650 (Stroke Line)

ⁱHeart and Stroke Foundation of Canada. 2009 Stroke Report Card. http://www.heartandstroke.on.ca/site/c.pvI3IeNWJwE/b.5232131/k.E66/2009_Stroke_Report_Card_full_report.htm (Accessed July 7, 2011)

ⁱⁱHeart and Stroke Foundation of Canada. http://www.heartandstroke.com/site/c.ikiQLcMWJtE/b.3484157/k.8AD7/Stroke_Effects_of_a_stroke.htm (Accessed July 7, 2011)

ⁱⁱⁱ Centre for Innovation in Complex Care, University Health Network. *Reconnecting the Pieces to Optimize Care in Atrial Fibrillation*. April, 2011.

^{iv}Connolly SJ, Ezekowitz MD, Yusuf S, et al. Dabigatran versus Warfarin in Patients with Atrial Fibrillation. *N Eng J Med* 2009; 361:1139-1151

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