In January, the American Heart Association announced a major change that will influence how the organization will function—and hopefully be perceived—as an advocate for and supporter of research and educational programs on stroke. It introduced the American Stroke Association, a Division of the American Heart Association. It is not a new entity but actually a new name for the AHA’s Stroke Division, created 1 year ago to coordinate and direct the association’s increasing emphasis on stroke research and education.

I am particularly pleased that this name change has occurred during my presidency of the AHA. To our external and internal audiences, the new name demonstrates that the AHA’s passion in the fight against death and disability from stroke is as strong as its fight against death and disability from heart disease. That passion will be translated into more research and education programs on stroke.

The American Stroke Association, a Division of the American Heart Association, will:

- Create a stronger identity to serve as a focus for continued expansion of stroke programs at the AHA.
- Reinforce the importance of “stroke” in the AHA’s motto, “fighting heart disease and stroke.” To the AHA’s national center and affiliate staff and its over 4 million volunteers, the new name sends a clear message that the AHA is committed to stroke.
- Increase medical and scientific communities’ and stroke patients’ recognition of the AHA as a resource of information, education, and research on stroke.
- Strengthen the AHA’s position as a leader in stroke research and education.
- Increase donations for stroke research and education due to the AHA’s more visible link with the disease.

The name change resulted from an evaluation by AHA volunteer and staff leaders of what the association was “doing for stroke.” The AHA has been active for many years in promoting early detection, prevention, and treatment of stroke, which accounts for one third of all cardiovascular disease deaths. In 1993, AHA added “stroke” to its motto of “Fighting Heart Disease and Stroke.” Before 1993, AHA included stroke in its mission statement.

The American Stroke Association, a Division of the American Heart Association, builds on many recent accomplishments and commitments to stroke. They include the following:

- Devoted about $57 million in the past year to education and research directly and indirectly on stroke.
- In research, funded through the national center and its affiliates a total of $39.4 million for 265 grants and fellowships directly or indirectly related to stroke.
- In 5 major cities, launched the Metro Stroke Task Force, a coalition of healthcare professionals, allied health providers, civic leaders, and representatives of community organizations. This program, which resulted in 38 new hospital stroke teams to handle stroke emergencies, will be expanded by the AHA to more cities.
- Drew over 1500 scientists and other health professionals to the AHA’s 1998 International Joint Conference on Stroke and Cerebral Circulation. The attendance was a 16% increase over the previous year.
- Handled over 27,000 telephone calls from stroke survivors and their family members through the AHA’s Stroke Connection “warmline” (1-800-553-6321).
- Boosted the AHA’s Stroke Connection magazine circulation to over 67,000.
- Increased the number of clubs registered with Stroke Connection to 1600, an increase of 180.
- Proposed to the Bugher Foundation that it devote substantial funds to stroke research. The foundation responded by committing over $1 million annually for 7 years.

Last year, the AHA’s leadership voted to dedicate itself to achieving the following goal: to reduce coronary heart disease, stroke, and risk by 25% by the year 2008. To decrease these diseases to this extent, the AHA is undergoing changes. The American Stroke Association, a Division of the American Heart Association, is one of those changes and a step toward meeting a goal that will save lives and prevent disability in thousands of people.

Key Words: American Heart Association ■ editorials ■ stroke prevention