World Stroke Day Proclamation 2015
Call to Preserve Cognitive Vitality

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Strokes (2008), and a prioritized world stroke agenda (2010). On the occasion of World Stroke Day 2015, an esteemed group of international stroke experts focus our attention on joining forces to prevent stroke and potentially preventable dementias.3 Key tenets of the 2015 proclamation include the following: (1) stroke and some dementias may be prevented; (2) shared risks (eg, tobacco use, physical inactivity, and poor diet) account for leading world health problems including major dementias of later life; (3) prevention has been neglected or not optimally applied; (4) poststroke dementia should be an integral part of stroke care; (5) major dementias commonly have a vascular component and detection and management of vascular risks should be encouraged; (6) organized stroke and dementia care and rehabilitation can improve outcomes; and (7) the need to better support and inform patients with stroke and caregivers, and a call to engage the public to increase knowledge that stroke and some dementias may be preventable.3

Why is this year’s proclamation about stroke and the potentially preventable dementias so timely and important? For many years, the scientific community has been fixed on Alzheimer disease (AD), and vascular cognitive disorders have received less emphasis.4 There is no doubt that AD is extremely important to our understanding of late-life cognitive impairment. However, despite the recognition in the late 1990s and early 2000s that AD and vascular cognitive disorders may have shared cardiovascular risks, the scientific community was slow to embrace the relationship.5,7 Furthermore, many past cardiovascular risk reduction trials did not include comprehensive study of cognitive function, and only more recently have these trials incorporated cognitive metrics as a key outcome.8,9 Thus, missed opportunities to study cognitive function in patients with a high burden of vascular risks have been common.

The opinions expressed in this article are not necessarily those of the editors or of the American Heart Association.

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to cognitive impairment are present across a time continuum. Thus, it will be important to capture vascular mechanisms at work across a real-time continuum and with valid biomarkers to better clarify potential intervention touch points before the underlying neuropathologic processes become too far advanced and are irreversible. This may mean that long-term multidisciplinary clinical study is required beginning in midlife or earlier.

The contributors to World Stroke Day Proclamation 2015 share an important message: we need to join forces to prevent stroke and potentially preventable dementias. Given a renewed momentum in relation to the importance of vascular risks on cognitive function, establishment of funded centers of excellence for the study of vascular brain injury and vascular contributions to cognitive vitality with transdisciplinary, translational, and transactional links within and between centers is a timely and logical next step.2,10

Disclosures

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References


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