

PRESS RELEASE

2nd February 2022

Stroke is the leading cause of acquired disability and the 3rd leading cause of death in Ireland

Professor Joe Harbison, Clinical Lead on the Irish National Audit of Stroke (INAS) today launches the Irish National Audit of Stroke National Report 2020 at a virtual meeting hosted by the National Office of Clinical Audit (NOCA). There are approximately 6000 strokes admitted to Irish hospitals per year - this report analysed data on 5,153 stroke patients. While stroke is looked upon as a disease of the older person, over a quarter of the cases were aged under 65 years. 57% of all cases were male.

Stroke is a medical emergency which requires urgent treatment. The sooner a person arrives to hospital, is assessed by a doctor and receives a brain scan, the less damage is likely to happen. This results in better outcomes and less disability. Only 50% of patients arrived at hospital within 3 hours of onset of stroke symptoms.

Launching this year's report, Professor Joe Harbison said "This years' report is the largest and most complete we have produced in the last 10 years despite the challenges of compiling it during the COVID-19 pandemic. It shows continued improvement in some areas, especially in getting patients to urgent treatment faster. In other areas, such as admission to stroke units and provision of therapies, substantial room for improvements remain."

KEY FINDINGS:

- The median time to contact with a doctor after arrival at hospital was 11 minutes, 6 minutes faster than in 2019.
- The median time from arrival at hospital to brain scan was 1 hour and 3 minutes, 17 minutes faster than in 2019.
- Thrombolysis is the breakdown of blood clots formed in blood vessels using medication. The thrombolysis rate was 10.6%, similar to 2019 but could be increased if people attended hospital as soon as possible.
- 8.6% of all ischaemic stroke patients had a thrombectomy. This is a procedure where large clots can be removed from arteries in the brain. The current thrombectomy rate in Europe is 1.9%.
- 71% of patients with a stroke were admitted to a stroke unit (below the target of 90%).
- 88% of all patients with a stroke were assessed by at least one type of health and social care professional (HSCP).
- 71% of ischaemic stroke cases had disabilities on discharge.
- 59% of patients were discharged home with a further 7% provided with Early Supported Discharge (stroke specific rehabilitation in the home rather than in hospital).
- Mortality reduced from 12% in 2019 to 11% in 2020.
- There was no substantial change in stroke activity between the pre-COVID-19 and COVID-19 periods.

Martin Quinn, Public Representative on the INAS Audit added “I am a stroke survivor, having suffered a stroke in 2013 while I was doing an interview on local radio. It should never be forgotten that the patient is the central figure in healthcare, and the patient’s voice must always be heard, as it is by the INAS Governance Committee. The INAS continues to highlight the need to increase public awareness of the symptoms of stroke and the importance of seeking immediate emergency care. I fully agree with the INAS recommendation that a stroke awareness campaign should be funded as a priority in order to ensure that patients can access care as quickly as possible. We need a firm commitment to implement this by the end of 2022.”

Copies of the National Report are available to download [here](#) and Summary Report [here](#).

ENDS

NOTES TO THE EDITOR:

About NOCA

NOCA was established in 2012 to create sustainable clinical audit programmes at national level. NOCA enables those who manage and deliver healthcare to improve the quality of care through national clinical audit. NOCA is funded by the Health Service Executive Office of the Chief Clinical Officer, governed by an independent voluntary board and operationally supported by the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland.

SPOKESPERSONS	
Professor Joe Harbison Clinical Lead Irish National Audit of Stroke	Martin Quinn Public and Patient Interest Representative Irish National Audit of Stroke

Prof Joe Harbison will officially launch the Irish National Audit of Stroke National Report 2020 at 10am on Wednesday 2nd February 2022 at the INAS launch webinar.

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