

Stroke Association statement

2021 G7 Summit

Background

The G7 is the 'Group of Seven' richest nations – UK, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and USA. The European Union is also represented. In 2021, the UK has the Presidency of the G7. The 2021 G7 Summit is the 47th meeting of the group and will take place in Cornwall from 11-13 June.

The G7 is an important annual meeting where leaders of the most powerful nations discuss the most pressing issues facing the world, including health, the global economy and climate change. The 2021 Summit is particularly important because the G7 leaders will be discussing the global recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic¹. The UK has the opportunity with the Presidency of G7 to play a leading role in shaping the global health agenda².

We know that stroke, one of the major non-communicable diseases (NCDs)³, is the second leading cause of death worldwide⁴ and that one in four people over the age of 25 will have a stroke in their lifetime⁵. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, studies have hinted that the virus can increase the risk of stroke in some people. However, we need further studies in more people to understand if the virus increases the likelihood of stroke in different groups of people, and by how much.

The profile of stroke and research investment are disproportionately small to that of conditions with a comparable burden, both in the UK and worldwide. Already chronically underfunded, the COVID-19 pandemic has hit stroke research even further, cutting research budgets and putting vital improvements in treatment and care at risk, both in the UK and globally. This will have a catastrophic effect on stroke research, setting the field back years.

¹ <https://www.g7uk.org/policy-priorities/>

² APPG Global Health March 2021 <https://globalhealth.inparliament.uk/news/uk-g7-and-global-health>

³ https://ncdalliance.org/sites/default/files/resource_files/ActingOnStroke%26NCDs_FINAL.pdf

⁴ World Health Organization. (2020) The top 10 causes of death. Available at: <https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/the-top-10-causes-of-death>. Last accessed 11/05/2021

⁵ V. Feigin et al. Global, Regional, and Country-Specific Lifetime Risks of Stroke, 1990 and 2016. *New England Journal of Medicine* 2018;379:2429-2437

Globally during the COVID-19 pandemic stroke admissions fell, as many people who had a stroke delayed seeking emergency medical attention. The disruption to health and care services caused by COVID-19 pandemic meant national stroke initiatives across the UK and globally were paused or slowed^{6 7}.

This is putting the progress made in stroke care over recent years at significant risk.

What does the Stroke Association think?

We welcome :

- the 2021 G7 policy priority to create a stronger global health system that can protect us all from future pandemics.
- the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Global Health's statement [The UK, G7 and global health](#). This statement highlights the need for multi-national action and global solidarity, calls for the UK to continue to be a global leader in health and health science, and calls for a fully integrated approach to the three great global threats of climate change, pandemics, and NCDs.

What do we want to see?

Stroke and other NCDs must be recognised in policy and actions to build back better from the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. Stroke research

- It is essential to continue to invest in ground-breaking studies that have been set back and to start new research that could prevent stroke-related deaths and transform stroke treatments and care.

⁶ Nogueira RG, Abdalkader M, Qureshi MM, et al. Global impact of COVID-19 on stroke care. *International Journal of Stroke*. March 2021

⁷ Markus HS, Brainin M. COVID-19 and stroke—A global World Stroke Organization perspective. *International Journal of Stroke*. 2020;15(4):361-364

- We need investment in studies in more people to understand the impact of the virus and pandemic on stroke risk and recoveries.
- 2. Stroke recoveries**
- National stroke initiatives must urgently progress given the damaging effects of the pandemic on stroke survivors.
 - Access to rehabilitation services, meaningful involvement of stroke survivors, increased provision of mental health services and support to carers now have increased urgency due to the effects of the pandemic.
- 3. Public awareness**
- Investment in public awareness of the signs of stroke and emergency response, Act FAST, is vital given its success as a behaviour change intervention and particularly in preparation for any future surge in Covid-19 cases.

What are we doing?

- May is Stroke Awareness Month and this year we wanted as many people as possible to know that stroke research is under threat, so we launched our '[Save research. Rebuild lives.](#)'
- We are [funding research](#) that advances our understanding of the causal links and potential mechanisms between COVID-19 and stroke.
- We are continuing to support [life after stroke](#) through our services across the UK and to raise [public awareness](#) of the signs of stroke.
- We collaborate with a [global network](#) of stroke charities, researchers and people affected by stroke.