Stroke Literacy in Singapore: Data From a Survey of Public Housing Estate Residents

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Abstract

Introduction: Knowledge of stroke symptoms is associated with seeking medical attention early, and knowledge of risk factors is an essential factor in stroke prevention. In this study, we evaluated the level of stroke literacy in Singapore. Materials and Methods: A cross-sectional study of Singapore citizens and permanent residents aged 21 years and above was conducted in a public housing estate. Participants were randomly sampled using multi-stage stratified sampling. Assessment of awareness of stroke symptoms and risk factors was performed using open-ended questions. In total, 687 respondents were recruited, with a response rate of 69.7%. Results: Overall, 52.4% of respondents identified the brain as the source of pathology, and 47.6% could cite at least 1 of the 3 FAST symptoms (facial droop, arm weakness and speech difficulty), while 40% could name 2 or more of 7 established risk factors for stroke (high blood pressure, high cholesterol, cigarette smoking, diabetes mellitus, older age, previous heart attacks and stroke). Respondents at higher risk of stroke (older individuals and those with stroke risk factors) did not have greater awareness of stroke symptoms and risk factors. The majority of respondents reported they would seek immediate medical care if they experienced stroke symptoms. Only 59.4% knew the emergency ambulance service telephone number. Conclusion: In a sample of Singaporean adults residing in a public housing estate, we found evidence of poor stroke literacy, highlighting the need for comprehensive population-based education efforts. There is a role for opportunistic education among those at higher risk of stroke.

Key words: Health education, Health promotion

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