

# Stroke Pathways

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## Abstract

*Stroke pathways are task-orientated structured multidisciplinary care plans which detail essential steps and interventions during the period of care of a "typical" stroke patient. Pathway development and implementation are best achieved by an appointed champion leading a multidisciplinary team of health care workers and administrators, who will also be the end users of the pathway. Pathway development involves reviews of existing clinical practice guidelines and pathways, followed by documentation, interdigitation and prioritisation of care requirements at different time points in the various spheres, taking into consideration local philosophies and practices. These spheres could include investigations, pharmacologic treatment, rehabilitative therapy, nursing measures, and patient education. This would result in evidence-based holistic quality care, wide support base, efficient service provision, reduced costs and length of stay, less practice variation, improved communication among disciplines, enhanced patient-staff relationship, ease of audit and research opportunities. Components of the pathway could include a patient summary sheet, multidisciplinary record of the various activities structured on a day-to-day basis, sign-off columns for staff responsible for performing those activity, variance sheet, and separate protocols for specific issues. Implementation requires training of users, pilot runs, feedback, regular revisions, monitoring of compliance, and analysis of variances. Widespread implementation of pathways may be hindered by lack of support, and concerns about increased time requirements and costs, stifling of innovation, restriction of application of clinical judgement, lack of applicability to all patients, misuse and legal issues. However, a well-designed pathway will ensure quality care in a cost-efficient manner, benefiting the patient, carer and the health care service.*

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