
Involvement of national Ministers of Health

Rationale, considerations and reflections

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Why do we need to work with national Ministers of Health?



1. SAP-E includes elements that cannot be fulfilled only internally within the stroke profession or by a stroke support organisation
2. SAP-E has a broader framework than guidelines aimed for those working with stroke patients
3. Stroke services differ between countries but even for the best countries the SAP-E is not fully implemented
4. Each country is autonomous in final decisions of the health services within the country = need for country specific actions
5. Local hospitals and regions could set up own approach leading to inequalities of care within a country

Solution:

- Need coordinated national leadership approach
- Which requires decision makers on policies, priorities and resources = usually Ministers of Health

Advocacy: role of professional societies and stroke support organisations



1. Professional societies

- provide professional advice and expertise to decision makers
- cover all aspects of stroke prevention and stroke care
- provide scientific and economic data and evidence
- provide solutions to a long term plan

2. Stroke support organisations

- bring the lived experience – the voice of the stroke survivor
- provide data and evidence from the patient perspective
- can demand for improvements in health care (Bill of Rights)
- provide solutions to a long term plan

Challenges in addressing Ministers of Health

- Competition of attention and resources with other diseases
- General elections and ever changing contacts
- Political platform is very different from the scientific one or normal day to day one
 - most of us have not received any training in taking health issues to the MoH level
- Establishing and retaining contacts and communication
 - Time to prepare, to follow up and to keep up the pressure

Preparation 1: what have others done



In some countries:

- communication with MoH is already established
- there are national stroke plans
- learn from good examples (from all parts of the stroke chain)

Preparation 2: think like a politician



For a meeting or briefing document - the questions that will be asked:

1. Why should stroke specifically be addressed?
2. What are your arguments?
3. How can this be solved?
4. Why now?
5. Why is this relevant to my constituents?
6. What do you want me to do?

Responses need to well prepared, specific and immediate at hand

For politicians – keep is short, solutions focused and relevant to their constituents/votes

For civil servants – they need the detail

Preparation 3: make it relevant – what is the issue for their constituents



What is the problem in your country

- Demonstrate the size of the problem
- Refer to an evidenced based source document
- Demonstrate gaps and inequalities in occurrence of stroke and in stroke services
- Take the patient story/constituent to the politician – just stating statistics is insufficient

Preparation 4: sell the solutions – what actions can they take, how will it impact on their constituents



Go to them with solutions

- Show that substantial improvements can be made by their actions
- Demonstrate that actions are extremely cost effective for the society
- Use the SAP-E

Show them how progress can be measured

- surveillance and quality of care
- SAP-E KPIs
- SAP-E targets

Overall – show them how they can be a champion for the people (and win votes)

Preparation 5: prepare to be involved – keep up the pressure



Get them something to do to show their commitment

- Plan an event to sign the declaration
- Ask questions in parliament
- Invite them to your hospitals/units/events
- Get photos, media coverage to enable positive publicity for them

Preparation 6: prepare to be involved – keep up the pressure



Attract and retain their attention – keep up the noise:

- Distribute campaign reports, send briefings ahead of debates
- Attend Parliamentary Group and health committee meetings
- Hold regular events
 - Parliamentary receptions on stroke awareness or report launch days
- Attend at Party Conferences
- Be known by other Government bodies
 - Relevant committees, advisory/regulatory bodies

Can we do this?



Definitively

The arguments for stroke are good - possibly stronger than for almost any other disease

Do not be shy!

Good luck!