

Stroke now fourth leading cause of death according to the CDC

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

A new report, “Deaths: Preliminary Data for 2008,” released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), says that for the first time in 50 years, stroke has fallen from the third to the fourth leading cause of death.

“While these results will not be final until further analysis has been completed in mid-2011, the American Heart Association is heartened to see a continuing decrease in stroke mortality, which can be attributed in part to improved prevention, and in part to the improved quality of care for stroke patients by hospitals, including the increased use of clot-busting drugs known as thrombolytics and the provision of medications demonstrated effective in preventing recurrent strokes,” said Ralph L. Sacco, M.D., president of the American Heart Association and chairman, department of neurology Miller School of Medicine University of Miami.

“However, there are still too many deaths, and more people and their families are living with the aftermath of stroke—physical disabilities, caretaker demands, lost income and extensive health care and rehabilitation costs. There is significantly more work to be done in the prevention and treatment of stroke.”

According to the CDC report, 2,202 fewer people died from stroke in 2008 than in 2007. However, stroke remains a leading cause of serious, long-term disability in the United States, costing an estimated \$73.7 billion in 2010, according to American Heart Association figures.

The change in the ranking of stroke from the third to the fourth leading cause of death is also due, in part, to the CDC’s reclassification of chronic lower respiratory diseases. For example, certain respiratory diseases were previously assigned to other classifications but have now been moved into the chronic respiratory disease group, and deaths in this group increased.

The American Heart Association and its division, the American Stroke Association, remain committed to reducing stroke deaths, improving the quality of care received by stroke patients and educating people to call 9-1-1 immediately if they have stroke symptoms.

This year, the association added a major health impact goal—to improve the nation’s cardiovascular health by 20 percent by the year 2020.

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“By improving the cardiovascular health of Americans and encouraging healthy behaviors, the American Heart Association is striving to stop stroke from ever occurring,” said Sacco.