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**Stroke Awareness: N.C. Stroke Association Is the Catalyst for Innovative Stroke Programs
in North Carolina's Rural Communities**

NCSA provides tools in Stroke Belt State's community hospitals

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. (May 18, 2010) — North Carolina has long been referred to as part of the Stroke Belt's "buckle," meaning the state's death rates from stroke are up to three times the national average. To reduce the state's incidence and impact of stroke, the [N.C. Stroke Association](#) collaborates with North Carolina's community hospitals to bring innovative, turnkey, evidence-based stroke programs into their rural communities.

"Small, rural hospitals are frequently working with a very lean infrastructure and have limited staffing resources and time to develop programs for stroke education and follow-up," says Carolyn Ezzell, BSN, RN-BC, Community Services Coordinator for Duplin General Hospital in Kenansville, N.C., a rural farming community in southeastern North Carolina with one of the highest uninsured rates in the state, and stroke death rates that are higher than the state and national averages. "Our goal is to see stroke death rates decline in our county, and the resources available from NCSA have allowed us to work toward that goal."

The N.C. Stroke Association assists N.C. hospitals in broadening their reach through stroke programs and protocols. The NCSA [Stroke Risk Identification Program](#) addresses stroke screening, prevention and education. The NCSA [Beyond the Hospital](#) program addresses education on avoiding future strokes, post-stroke services and follow-up. In addition, the [NCSA Partnership Grant Program](#) assists N.C. hospitals in funding these programs in their communities.

"Duplin General Hospital uses the Stroke Risk Identification questionnaire for our stroke screenings because it provides valuable follow-up for participants who have elevated levels of cholesterol, blood sugar, blood pressure, etc.," said Ezzell. "The screenings have benefited the community tremendously by allowing us to educate participants about stroke awareness, stroke prevention and the importance of 'knowing their numbers.' And, the data NCSA provides back to us is very useful to show the need for continued community service programs around stroke awareness."

Onslow Memorial Hospital in Jacksonville, N.C., uses the NCSA Stroke Risk Identification and Beyond the Hospital programs to evaluate their stroke initiatives, make changes to improve stroke care in the hospital and establish a strong presence out in the community. “Many of the patients that I have personally screened using the NCSA Stroke Risk Identification program had no idea they had high cholesterol, hypertension or diabetes,” says Mallory Antico, RN, BSN, Stroke Nurse Coordinator. “One major problem with stroke risk factors is they often go unnoticed. People don’t often feel any different with hypertension or high cholesterol, so unless they are screened, they don’t know.”

Maria Parham Medical Center in Henderson, N.C. utilizes NCSA’s Beyond the Hospital program and provides all of its stroke and transient ischemic attack (TIA) patients with the Beyond the Hospital educational manual. “It has such good information and is a valuable resource for our patients,” says Jan Parham, R.N., Maria Parham’s Stroke Coordinator. “We feel that education is a key factor as we continuously strive for better outcomes for our stroke patients, and the Beyond the Hospital program is very important to us as we provide that education. The follow-up data provided by NCSA also allows us to see how effective that education has been.”

Ezzell of Duplin General Hospital says NCSA programs such as Beyond the Hospital allow small, rural hospitals to provide better care for their community. “Our focus is to provide the highest quality care possible for our patients, and NCSA helps us succeed in doing that,” she explains.

Adds Antico of Onslow Memorial Hospital, “Many of the challenges that our community and hospital face related to stroke are being experienced by others across the state. NCSA provides us with valuable advice and support so that I always feel assured, as a stroke nurse coordinator, I have someone to go to if I need help.”

About the N.C. Stroke Association

*The North Carolina Stroke Association is a 501 (c) 3 organization founded in 1998 by a group of physicians and lay people who saw the need to address the state’s increasing prevalence of stroke and its attendant disabilities. With operational seed money from the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust, NCSA began to fulfill its mission to reduce the **incidence and impact** of stroke in North Carolina through collaborations to facilitate **screening, education, outcome assessments and advocacy**. For more information, visit www.ncstroke.org.*