Top international honors for reducing the global burden of Stroke

Monday, 15th February 2016

The World Stroke Organization (WSO) today announced the winners of the three categories of World Stroke Day 2015 Awards. In recognition of the different challenges faced by high-income vs low- and middle-income countries in tackling the burden of stroke, this year’s program recognized the Best Campaign in a Low to Middle Income country and the Best Campaign in a High Income country respectively.

Chair of the World Stroke Campaign, Dr Erin Lalor said acknowledging this difference was important, “Two out of every three people who suffer from a stroke live in low- and middle-income countries, with stroke incidence in low- to middle-income countries exceeding those of high-income countries by 20%.”

The Chinese Stroke Association (CSA) won the Low to Middle Income category with a week-long World Stroke Campaign program, including large event displays which tied with the World Stroke Organization’s 2015 campaign theme of “I am Woman” with CSAs added emphasis on improving care of minor stroke. Their events included health consultations, free physical tests, posters and video promotion.

“The reach of this campaign was very impressive” said President of the World Stroke Organization, Professor Stephen Davis. “They collaborated well with other organizations, physicians, and the Chinese government to run 1,000 concurrent events across 123 cities, and drawing significant national media attention with their highly visible red bracelet volunteers.”

The Finnish Brain Association won the High-Income category with their Blood Pressure campaign which drew attention to the important issue of hypertension in women as a risk factor, as previous research showed that only 17 percent of Finns knew that hypertension was harmful on brain health. The campaign included free pop-up measurement points across the country in collaboration with the Finnish Diabetes and Heart Associations through One Life. Novel pop-up points included Parliament, trains, petrol stations and fairs.

“The WSO were impressed by the campaign reach as it was the biggest blood pressure campaign ever organized in Finland reaching the entire population, and had significant government support” said Professor Davis.

Two special awards were also given to individuals whose commitment, creativity and achievement raised awareness of the key theme of World Stroke Day stroke prevention, treatment and care. The two winners of the Individual Achievement Award were Mrs Rita Melifonwu from Stroke Action, Nigeria and Professor Dipes Mandal from Stoke Foundation Bengal, India respectively.

Rita Melifonwu from Nigeria was recognized for her lobbying efforts to the Federal Ministry of Health (Nigeria) and the Medical Association of Nigerians Across Great Britain to support an MOU with Stroke Action Nigeria to implement national power to a Stop Strokes campaign, including: a stroke assembly conference; stroke services development including a Nigeria Stroke Reference Group; national stroke registry; and a national stroke strategy. She also mentored two female stroke survivors to become Stroke Ambassadors for World Stroke Day in connection with the “I am Woman” theme, and their empowering message reached over 100 million Nigerians through radio, television, newspaper and social media.
On winning the Individual Achievement Award Mrs Melifonwu said she “feels confident that ongoing collaborative actions to improve stroke care in Nigeria will continue in the right pathway”. She adds that she is “very excited about the opportunities for stroke services development in Nigeria, and the differences this will make to the lives of survivors, their carers and at risk individuals.”

Fellow Individual Achievement Award recipient Professor Dipes Mandal from India was recognized for his considerable efforts in passionately spear-heading activities of the Stroke Foundation of Bengal which he established, including organizing seminars, conceptualizing the quarterly bilingual stroke Bulletin, raising awareness through social media, developing a stroke documentary, and establishing Stroke Support Groups.

“The honour the Campaign selectors have awarded to me is dedicated to the millions of Stroke Patients who face death, near death, are disabled or have lives without proper life with freedom of expression or dignity as normal citizens around the world,” said Professor Mandal. “The World Stroke Campaign has a great impact in the fight against stroke and it is rapidly increasing around the world in short times.”

All award submissions were judged against four criteria: application of the World Stroke Day theme; success in reaching local objectives; creativity and innovation; and targeting, reach and impact. The recipients will be formally recognized at the World Stroke Congress in Hyderabad, India in October 2016.

WSO would like to thank everyone who took part in WSD and those who submitted their application for a 2015 World Stroke Day Award. “Our Awards Committee received over 40 outstanding entries for the awards from different regions in the world and different health settings, so it was a tough task to narrow it down to the winners.” said Professor Davis. “Congratulations to all of our award winners and a sincere thanks to the efforts of all associations and individuals to promote World Stroke Day to help us to achieve our mission of One World Voice for Stroke”.

There will be a brand new campaign theme for World Stroke Day on 29th October 2016 which WSO is excited to share in the coming months.

For more information about the World Stroke Campaign visit www.worldstrokecampaign.org

WSO gratefully acknowledges the financial contribution of its corporate partners to put the fight against stroke on the global health agenda.

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