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Women Should Know Stroke Symptoms

May is National Stroke Awareness Month

San Diego, Calif., (May 07, 2015) – According to the American Stroke Association, one in every five women will have a stroke at some point in her life. Of the 137,000 stroke deaths reported each year in the United States, 60 percent of these victims are females. If we break it down, this is double the amount of breast cancer deaths, making stroke the third leading cause of death for women.

These facts are alarming, yet surveys continue to find that women aren't aware of their stroke risk factors and that they are often unable to identify the symptoms of stroke.

"Women may experience stroke symptoms that are different from those most commonly reported," says Kaiser Permanente San Diego Vascular Neurologist William Neil, MD, regional stroke champion for Kaiser Permanente Southern California. "These women-specific stroke symptoms can create a problem because they are often ignored or dismissed as an everyday occurrence," he added.

The common symptoms include:

Sudden difficulty with balance, vision loss, weakness of face arm or leg, and difficulty speaking.

Other symptoms may include:

A sudden headache that hits you hard and fast, and has no obvious cause

Extreme Exhaustion

Hiccups accompanied with minor chest pain

Nausea and Vomiting

Sudden behavioral change, agitation

Loss of consciousness or fainting

Pain on one side of the body

"The sooner a stroke patient receives medical care, the greater the chance of surviving and minimizing any long-term effects," said Dr. Neil. "To be most effective, stroke treatments must be administered within the first three hours of the first symptoms," he added.

You can help prevent a stroke by controlling certain risk factors and treating or managing medical conditions that can increase your risk of having a stroke. According to the American Stroke Association, up to 80 percent of all strokes are preventable. More than

half of all strokes are caused by uncontrolled hypertension or high blood pressure, making it the most important risk factor to control.

So what can you do to lower your stroke risk? Dr. Neil offers the following tips:

- Work with your doctor to manage and control high blood pressure or high cholesterol.
- If you have diabetes, keep your blood sugar levels within a target range.
- Don't smoke, and if you do, quit!
- Limit alcohol to 2 drinks a day for men and 1 drink a day for women.
- Maintain a healthy weight - Being *overweight* or *obese* increases your risk of developing diabetes, high blood pressure and other heart problems that increase your risk of stroke.
- Get at least 30 minutes of exercise a day.
- Follow a heart-healthy diet, rich in fruits, vegetables and high in fiber. Limit your consumption of foods high in sodium, saturated fat, trans fat and cholesterol.

NOTE: Kaiser Permanente San Diego is Stroke Gold certified from the American Heart Association/Stroke Association. This is a distinct honor that not all providers earn. The **Association's Get With The Guidelines®-Stroke Gold Plus Quality Achievement Award** recognizes our hospital's commitment and success in ensuring stroke patients receive the most appropriate treatment according to nationally recognized, research-based guidelines based on the latest scientific evidence.

To receive the Gold Plus Quality Achievement Award, hospitals must achieve 85 percent or higher adherence to all Get With The Guidelines-Stroke achievement indicators for two or more consecutive 12-month periods and achieved 75 percent or higher compliance with five of eight Get With The Guidelines-Stroke Quality measures.

About Kaiser Permanente:

Kaiser Permanente is committed to helping shape the future of health care. We are recognized as one of America's leading health care providers and not-for-profit health plans. Founded in 1945, our mission is to provide high-quality, affordable health care services and to improve the health of our members and the communities we serve. We currently serve more than 9 million members in nine states and the District of Columbia. Our expert and caring medical teams are empowered and supported by industry-leading technology advances and tools for health promotion, disease prevention, state-of-the-art care delivery and world-class chronic disease management.

Kaiser Permanente began serving San Diego in 1967, and currently provides care for more than 580,668 members throughout the county. Over 7,700 staff and more than 1,118 physicians care for our members at 24 medical facilities; Kaiser Permanente's San Diego Medical Center, which has 414 licensed beds and a 78 bed Emergency Department; and Palomar Medical Center, our plan hospital in North County. To learn more, visit kp.org/sandiego.

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