

ONE-OF-A-KIND TEAM CATCHES WARNING MINI-STROKES TO SAVE LIVES

Toronto, ON – A unique team of stroke specialists at Sunnybrook have been leading an aggressive approach to diagnosing and treating ‘mini-strokes’ before they lead to potentially devastating larger strokes that can leave people with paralysis and other permanent disability.

Sunnybrook’s Scotiabank Rapid Investigation and Stroke Prevention Program featuring the Dr. Thomas and Harriet Black High-Risk TIA Unit is one of only a few clinics of its kind in the country specializing in urgent care for high-risk Transient Ischemic Attacks (TIA) or so called ‘mini-strokes’. Mini-strokes are important to recognize because they can be critical warning events of an impending serious stroke that could happen within days or weeks. Treatments applied rapidly after a TIA can reduce the risk of a major stroke by as much as 80 per cent.

“We have found a solution to bypass the standard wait-times and provide high risk patients with ‘same-day diagnosis and treatment’”, says Dr. David Gladstone, director of the clinic. Part of the impetus for the new clinic model comes from Gladstone’s research showing that patients have traditionally waited weeks or months for tests and treatment after a TIA.

By providing fast-track consultation with stroke specialists, state-of-the-art neurovascular diagnostic tests, and initiation of a personalized treatment plan, the Sunnybrook clinic aims to prevent more strokes, avoid hospital admissions, and condense months of patient tests and appointments into a single day.

“We want to identify the high risk patients and initiate prevention treatments right away to reduce stroke risk,” adds Gladstone, also assistant professor of medicine at University of Toronto.

“Sunnybrook stroke specialists have made a remarkable breakthrough in treating strokes before they become potentially devastating. We are pleased to be able to support this important work by bringing this preventative program to the communities in the GTA and beyond,” said John Doig, Senior Vice President for Scotiabank’s Toronto Region.

Every ten minutes in Canada someone dies or is disabled from a stroke – a statistic that the Sunnybrook team wants to change. Since 2007, the innovative Sunnybrook clinic has helped hundreds of patients avoid stroke, including some very high-risk patients who were saved from imminent stroke by quickly identifying dangerous plaque in neck arteries and rushing them for urgent surgery to remove the blockage.

The clinic exemplifies the multidisciplinary approach of the hospital’s Regional Stroke Centre and Brain Sciences program, involving strong collaborations among Neurology, Neuroradiology and Medical Imaging, Neurosurgery and Vascular Surgery, Medicine, Psychiatry, Nursing and Allied Health. “This clinic is truly at the leading edge of stroke prevention,” says Gladstone.

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