



## *Media Statement*

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Wellington Street, Perth,  
Western Australia 6000  
Tel: (08) 9224 2209 Fax: (08) 9224 3447

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**National Stroke Week (September 17-23)**

**Stroke numbers dramatically fall in Perth**

A Royal Perth Hospital stroke expert says the incidence of stroke in Perth people has dropped by more than 40 per cent over the last 10 years.

Professor Graeme Hankey, head of the RPH Stroke Unit, said the decline in people having strokes was probably due to better control of causal risk factors such as smoking and alcohol use.

The soon-to-be published Perth Community Stroke Study (PCSS) found a 43 per cent overall decline in people having a “first ever” stroke between 1989 and 2001.

“We studied temporal trends in major stroke outcomes in Perth, Western Australia, comparing three 12 month periods, roughly five years apart, between 1989 and 2001,” Prof Hankey said.

The study looked at more than 130,000 Perth people in three study periods that were roughly five years apart.

The incidence of stroke for each period was:

- 1989-1990 – 251 cases
- 1995-96 – 213 cases
- 2001-01 – 183 cases

The decline in rates was greater in men than women over the entire period. Men recorded a 49 per cent decrease and among women, the rate decreased by 37 per cent.

The data gives medical professionals some confidence that people are adopting healthier lifestyles, resulting in lowering blood pressure, and lower tobacco and alcohol exposure.

But Prof Hankey said people could still do more to improve their health and thereby avoid stroke.

“We need to further improve lifestyle to minimise obesity and diabetes to avert an epidemic of stroke and other cardiovascular diseases,” he said.

“Decreasing the incidence of stroke by decreasing exposure to causal risk factors, rather than improving survival by more effective acute treatments for stroke, appeared to be the main driver of falling mortality from stroke in this population.”

Stroke is a major health burden. More than 40,000 Australians each year experience a stroke, nearly a third of which are fatal.

Although the declining rate of stroke in Perth is pleasing, Prof Hankey and his colleagues remain determined in fighting stroke.

“Approaches to prevention and management of stroke have been made, but there has been little direct feedback on their success to date and thus uncertainty regarding the potential impact of restraining the projected epidemic of stroke,” Prof Hankey said.

Prof Hankey is also the clinical lead in the VITATOPS (Vitamins to Prevent Stroke) study which is being undertaken in 100 medical centres in 20 countries, to compare the effect of B-vitamin supplements with a placebo in preventing a recurrence of stroke.

The PCCC will be published in *Stroke (Journal of the American Heart Association)* this month. The paper was co-authored by Robyn Broadhurst, Konrad Jamrozik, Shaheenal Islam, Craig S Anderson, Graeme Hankey, Kate Hardie and Kristie Carter.