

Heart Foundation

'Warning Signs of Heart Attack' action plan for patients with CHD

The Heart Foundation's campaign to reduce delay in patient response

Research shows that Australians wait too long before calling an ambulance for a suspected heart attack. **More than half of all deaths attributable to heart attack occur before the patient reaches hospital** with about 25% dying within one hour of their first ever symptom. Many deaths and much of the disability that result from heart attack could be avoided if people experiencing symptoms receive early medical treatment.

The most significant component of delay in treatment is the time patients take to seek appropriate medical care (the patient delay time). There has been no significant improvement in patient delay time within Australia. This is why the Heart Foundation has identified 'Warning Signs', a strategy to reduce patient delay to the warning signs of heart attack as one of the key themes of work within its 2008–2012 strategic plan, titled 'Championing Hearts'. The Heart Foundation is committed to raising the awareness and knowledge of heart attack warning signs and calling Triple Zero (000) by allocating significant resources which will ensure an ongoing and comprehensive strategy.

An important component of the 'Warning Signs' strategy is the development of a 'Warning Signs of Heart Attack' action plan for patients diagnosed with coronary heart disease (CHD). A recent Heart Foundation survey found that **there is no significant difference in the awareness of heart attack warning signs between people with known CHD and the broader community**. The Warning Signs of Heart Attack action plan will provide patients with clear and concise information about heart attack warning signs and the steps to follow when experiencing warning signs.

The Heart Foundation aims to provide institutions with the patient action plans for use as part of the necessary patient education process that takes place prior to hospital discharge and/or in a cardiac rehabilitation setting. Health professional staff will also be provided with information to assist them in educating their patients about the warning signs of heart attack.

Patients should be encouraged to keep the action plan at home or work, where they can easily refer to it. Some of the key messages that health professional staff can communicate to CHD patients and their families when distributing the action plan are:

- The various warning signs or symptoms of heart attack
- The potential to experience different symptoms in a future cardiac event
- How and when to use nitrate medications if appropriate
- The importance of acting quickly and calling triple zero (000) for an ambulance
- The value of transport to hospital by ambulance in order to receive early treatment and reduce heart damage
- It's better to act quickly even if you're not certain you're having a heart attack

The Warning Signs of Heart Attack patient action plan is scheduled to be available from September 2009.

Be updated

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