

# Comprehensive interventions essential for fighting the stroke epidemic

by Larry Huang

Comprehensive interventions, including intensive prevention, regular education and health promotion activities focusing on blood pressure control in the hypertension population could dramatically reduce the incidence and mortality of stroke in China, according to the results of studies presented yesterday morning by Professor Wenzhi Wang (Beijing Neurosurgical Institute).

Professor Wang reviewed the current situation of stroke prevention in China. In contrast to western countries, the mortality of stroke is twice as high as coronary heart disease (CHD) in China, based on 1990 WHO statistics. The distribution of stroke has a distinct geographic variation. Mortality and morbidity of stroke in northern China are significantly higher than in the southern part.

He went on to introduce a large scale community-based intervention study from 1991 to 2000 in China where two natural populations were divided into an intervention group and control group. The intervention group reached a much higher knowledge and

practice (KAP) level than the control group. The morbidity and mortality of stroke decreased by 21.6% and 33.2% in the intervention group compared with 6.2% and 24.8% in the control group from 1992 to 1995. The same trend and pattern continued between 1996 and 2000. Another major finding was that, among patients with hypertension who also received follow-up between 1993 and 1995, the blood pressure control rate increased from 22.5% to 48.3%. The study demonstrates that multiple community-based interventions can play an important role in reducing stroke morbidity and mortality.

Professor Wang suggested that primary care should be the main force in stroke prevention. Today, large hospitals in China are overcrowded, and primary care appears oblivious to CVD prevention. However, it is the very lack of primary care that limits the improvement of diagnosis and treatment as a whole. He concluded that the best strategy to fight CVD is for neurologists and primary doctors to build a network to optimize medical resources. ■