

# The Brain Buzz

A UAMS NEWSLETTER FOR STROKE SURVIVORS  
AND THEIR CAREGIVERS



**“Your present  
circumstances  
don’t  
determine  
where you go;  
they merely  
determine  
where you  
start.”**

**~Nido Qubein**

## Supporting Stroke Survivors and Their Families

By Dana M. Smith, MS, MCHES, CCE

After a stroke, a patient and his/her family are often stressed, scared and uncertain of the future. Emotional support during this time is crucial to help the whole family deal with the enormous pressure they might be feeling. All disciplines that work with patients at UAMS work hard to provide support and assistance to the patient and family. A unique addition to the support team at UAMS is Molly Schwarz, who is also a stroke survivor (see her story below). Each Tuesday and Thursday, Molly visits with patients currently admitted to the hospital. She is available to listen, provide support and give suggestions, if needed. Molly is also available to provide follow up support for patients and their family after the patient goes home from the hospital.



Molly Schwarz

If you would like Molly to visit with you while you are in the hospital, please let your nurse know. If you would like to speak with Molly after you go home, you may email her at [mschwarz@uams.edu](mailto:mschwarz@uams.edu) or call 501-686-7791.

### Molly’s Story

When Molly awoke on the morning of February 29, 2000, she had no idea that her life would change dramatically that day. It was a day like any other as Molly went to work for Northwest Airlines in Tampa, Florida. That afternoon, on her way home from work, Molly drove through an intersection less than a mile from her home. The light was green, and Molly, traveling 45 mph, didn't see the other driver until she T-boned his car with hers. The elderly driver in the other car was not wearing his glasses and had turned his car into Molly’s path, causing their cars to collide. He and Molly rode to the hospital in the same ambulance. He went home that night. Molly did not.

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## Supporting the Stroke Survivor Continued.....

At first, doctors thought Molly had only broken some fingers and ribs. But two hours later, she blacked out. An MRI showed her carotid artery had been injured in the accident and was blocking blood to her brain. She suffered a stroke.

For the next two months, Molly was in the hospital and rehab. She had lost her ability to speak and the right side of her body was not functioning. But Molly didn't give up and worked hard to regain some of what she had lost.

Today, she wears a boot on her right leg because she isn't able to control it. She is not able to use her right arm and sometimes she has trouble speaking when she is excited or nervous. But Molly doesn't let that slow her down and is living each day to the fullest! Molly lives independently, is able to drive on her own and is very active in her community. She is truly an inspiration to stroke survivors!

**STROKE is an Emergency.**  
**Every minute counts.**

**ACT F.A.S.T!**



**F**ACE

Does one side of the face droop?  
Ask the person to smile.



**A**RM

Is one arm weak or numb?  
Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?



**S**PEECH

Is speech slurred?  
Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence. Is the sentence repeated correctly?



**T**IME

If the person shows any of these symptoms, **Call 911** or get to the hospital immediately.



## Caregivers: Need Help After Your Loved One Has Had a Stroke?

The website provided by the American Stroke Association can help. This website provides many resources for caregivers to help you to manage the stressful time right after a stroke. Go to [www.strokeassociation.org](http://www.strokeassociation.org), click on "Life After Stroke" and then on "Family Caregivers." If you aren't able to access the internet, call the American Stroke Association at 1-888-4-STROKE.

"It is so important as a caregiver not to become so enmeshed in the role that you lose yourself. It's neither good for you nor your loved one."

- Dana Reeve

### **Refreshing the Caregiver**

*Source: American Stroke Association*

One of the most important things you can do for yourself and your loved one is to carve out time and space for yourself. This has to be a conscious action that you take every day. It could be as simple as spending 10 minutes playing a fun computer game. If you don't learn how to take a timeout, your frustration is going to boil over. You'll be less productive and your relationship with your loved one will suffer.

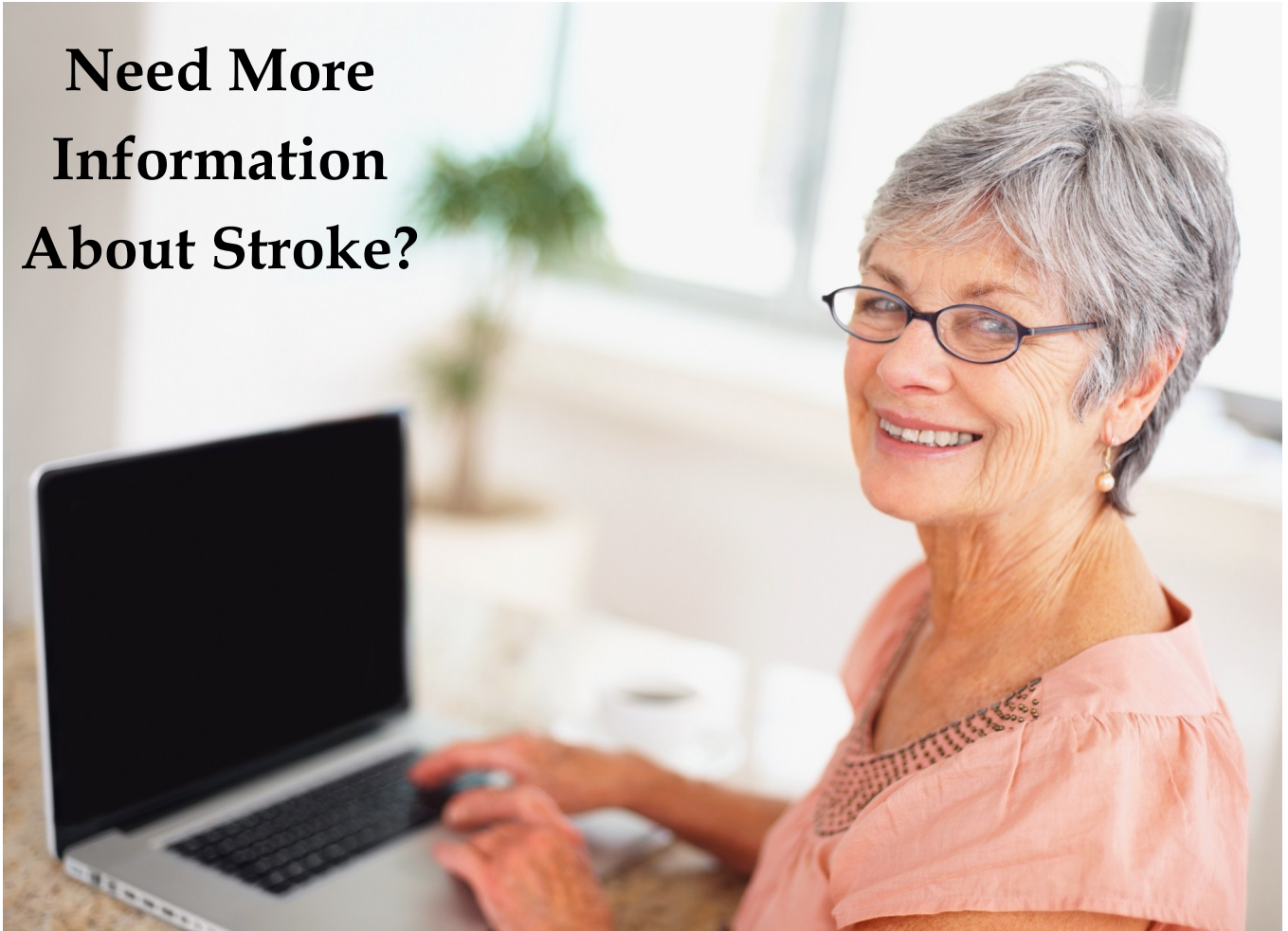
-Find a way to take a 10- or 15-minute walk a couple of times a day, even if it's just around the yard.

- Choose a space in the house that is your "quiet space" where you can go take a few deep breaths, close your eyes, read a book, pray, meditate, listen to music, sing, write in your journal, talk to a friend on the phone or just rest quietly for a few minutes.

-Schedule your timeouts. Choose a time when your loved one is typically sleeping, eating, watching a TV program or seems to be at their best during the day. They will get accustomed to your little timeouts after a while and stop resenting your privacy and interrupting you.

Insist on these moments in a gentle way and reward your loved one when you've refreshed yourself.

**Need More  
Information  
About Stroke?**



**National Stroke Association**

1-800-STROKES (787-6537)

[www.stroke.org](http://www.stroke.org)

**American Stroke Association**

1-888-4-STROKE (478-7653)

[www.strokeassociation.org](http://www.strokeassociation.org)

**UAMS Neurology Department**

501-686-5838

<http://neurology.uams.edu/>