



Research:
at a glance

Do London's stroke units provide 24/7 care? What do they do to achieve this?

What we know

Evidence shows that stroke patients do better if they are treated in a specialist Stroke unit.

Some research suggests stroke patients who are admitted to hospital at night or at weekends are more likely to die, or get poorer care.

London has **8 Hyper Acute Stroke Units (HASUs)** providing specialist care to all stroke patients for the first days following stroke. These units aim to provide “24/7” specialist care.

What we did

Quality of care and outcomes

We looked at national data for 68,239 stroke patients, to see if patients who got to hospital at night or at the weekend had the same outcomes and quality of care as people who arrived during weekdays.

Working to provide care round-the-clock

We interviewed 76 people and watched the stroke units in action for 102 hours to learn:

1. How stroke unit staff worked to provide high quality care to all patients
2. What staff thought about care during the day, night and at the weekends

What we found

Quality of care and outcomes

The time of day that a patient reached a London hospital following a stroke **did not affect how likely they were to die** or be severely disabled.

London patients also received important care such as **scans and clot-busting treatments** whatever time of day they were admitted.

Patients sometimes waited longer to be assessed by stroke doctors and therapists, and **care quality was generally worse on a Friday**

Care was provided more consistently in London than in the rest of England

Working to provide care round-the-clock

- It was important to have a **senior nurse in charge of the ward**
- Stroke staff built strong relationships with other hospital departments to ensure rapid transfer from A&E and access to scans
- There were fewer senior doctors on the ward at night, and junior doctors tended to allow more patients who had not had a stroke onto the stroke units.
- Fewer therapists at weekends reduced what stroke staff could do at weekends, and made for additional work on Mondays
- It was **harder to contact outside agencies**, such as social services and other hospitals, at the weekend.

What this means

- Our findings suggest that London's specialist Stroke units **provide a good service**, but there are still times when patients receive poorer care during the week.
- HASUs need suitable staffing for all professional groups across the day and week.
- HASUs are part of a wider system – 24/7 work is limited by other services.



References

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Find out more

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