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**NEWS RELEASE**

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**I am Woman: Stroke Affects Me**

*Global Anti-Stroke Organization Honors Mothers, Grandmothers and Sisters on International Women's Day*

**GENEVA | 8 March 2014** – Today, on the occasion of International Women's Day, the World Stroke Organization (WSO) is paying tribute to women who have fought, survived, and cared for loved ones who have had a stroke. Stroke is the principal cause of long-term disability, irrespective of age, sex, ethnicity or country.

There are 17 million people worldwide who suffer a stroke each year. Every other second, someone, be it an adult or a child, a man or a woman, old or young, suffers a stroke. One in five women is at risk for stroke, as opposed to one in six men. Of every 10 deaths from stroke, six occur in women and is largely attributed to stroke occurring later in life in women, due to their longer life expectancy than men. The highest rates for stroke are in older women. Women also tend to have worse outcomes than men as indicated by more severe disability and an increased likelihood of institutionalization.

WSO President Prof. Stephen Davis notes "women are especially affected by stroke. They have a higher mortality rate than men, and there are gender-specific risk factors such as pregnancy and hormonal therapies. Some stroke subtypes, such as cerebral vein thrombosis and subarachnoid hemorrhage, are much more common in women. Finally, the burden of caregiving falls predominantly on women. For these reasons, we are pleased to help raise awareness about the special challenges of stroke in women on International Women's Day."

Women are the foundation of most societies. They are our mothers, sisters, grandmothers, and partners. Every year 3.2 million women die of strokes globally according to the World Health Organization. This figure does not include a large number of women with long-term disabilities resulting from stroke. Women are at higher risk of stroke than men attributed to a higher incidence of migraines, depression, diabetes, and abnormal heart rhythm, known as atrial fibrillation.

Women living in resource-limited environments experience further obstacles in accessing cost-effective prevention, early detection and treatment due to gender inequality, family responsibilities, and the costs of seeking healthcare. These factors are compounded by health systems that fail to recognize and respond to the specific needs of women.

More often than not, women bear the responsibility of being the primary caregiver for a family member or friend recovering from a stroke. As Dr Erin Lalor, Chair of the World Stroke Campaign explains, "around 65 per cent of those who survive stroke are left with a disability that impedes their ability to carry out daily activities unassisted. We are talking about every-day activities; eating, walking, thinking,

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and communicating. The needs of stroke survivors are all too often left to wives, mothers, and daughters to address, as the health system is not equipped to cope.”

International Women’s Day is not only a time to celebrate the important role that women have in supporting those affected by strokes, but is also an opportunity to remind women to take the necessary steps to reduce their own risk by looking after themselves.

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**About the World Stroke Organization**

The World Stroke Organization (WSO) was established in October 2006. WSO’s mission is to reduce the global burden of stroke through prevention, treatment and long-term care.

As the lead international body for stroke, WSO aims to accomplish its mission by:

- Fostering the best standards of practice
- Increasing stroke awareness among the population and among health professionals
- Preventing subtle cerebrovascular disease leading to gait disorders, imbalance, vascular cognitive impairment, and behavioral changes
- Influencing policies for stroke prevention and improved health services
- Providing education in collaboration with public and private organizations
- Facilitating stroke research advocacy for people with stroke
- Fostering the development of systems and organizations for long-term care and support of stroke survivors and their families.

With individual and organizational members worldwide, including stroke support groups, WSO is the global voice for stroke. WSO is the only international stroke NGO in official relations with the World Health Organization (WHO). Prof. Stephen Davis, MD, FRCP, Edin FRACP, from Melbourne, Australia, is the president of the World Stroke Organization.