



AFRM POSITION STATEMENT

Endorsement: Developed by the Neuro-Rehabilitation Special Interest Group on 10 July 2008. Endorsed by the Education Committee on 10 December 2008, the Policy and Advocacy Committee on 22 January 2009 and by Faculty Executive on 11 February 2009.

Title: STROKE UNITS

Background:

The AFRM is aware of the growing evidence regarding the effectiveness of stroke units. To date the evidence is strong on the following points:

1. Stroke units significantly improve chances of survival after stroke
2. Stroke units significantly reduce the likelihood of discharge to nursing home
3. Stroke units significantly improve the likelihood of independent function

These outcomes seem to hold true for adult stroke patients of any age, and for strokes moderate to severe severity.

To date the evidence for how stroke units work strongly suggests that it is Rehabilitation principles, philosophy and practice that make the most difference in terms of improved outcomes.

There is some evidence that the earlier rehabilitation processes begin, the better are the outcomes for stroke patients. Studies into the physiology of recovery after stroke, and processes of cortical plasticity and neuro regeneration support this contention.

The AFRM recognises the strength of current evidence and the importance of specific acute therapies such as thrombolysis and hemicraniectomy for relevant patients.

Statement:

The AFRM position is that the establishment, development, modification or revision of any Stroke Unit in Australia or New Zealand must incorporate an active and supported Stroke Rehabilitation programme. Such Rehabilitation programmes should be linked as closely as possible to any existing Acute Stroke service, or may be part of a Comprehensive Stroke Unit.

References:

Langhorne & Dennis. Stroke Units: an evidence-based approach. (Oxford University Press 1998)

Stroke Unit Trialists' Collaboration 2004

What are the components of effective stroke unit care. Langhorne et al. Age and Ageing 2002;31:365-371

Key Features of a Stroke Unit adapted from Young and Foster, BMJ, 2007

Clinical Guidelines for Stroke Rehabilitation and Recovery. (National Stroke Foundation 2005)

Guidelines for the Early Management of Patients With Ischemic Stroke: A Scientific Statement From the Stroke Council of the American Stroke Association Issue:Volume 34(4), April 2003,

Musicco M et al. ArchPhysRehabMed 2003 Apr