



**Milan Čuček, Slovenia**  
**Stroke in 2002 aged 44**

“I was suddenly in a world I was not familiar with and have opened a new page in my life. All my social networks have been very supportive.

In 2003, I launched a local stroke club in Ptuj. We run several activities, like self-help groups, singing chorus, bowling and educational lectures.

In 2008, I was elected as a president of the Slovenian Stroke Support Organisation. My involvement has great meaning, a compensation for my job as I had to retire early. It gives me satisfaction to be involved in activities for other stroke survivors.

A new life that I am leading to the full.”



**Avashna Moodley, South Africa**  
**Stroke in 2011 aged 41**



**“There were no warning signs, no time to get my affairs in order, to prepare my kids for their mother who could no longer walk, talk, read, write or recall her life.**

**I had to rebuild, layer by layer. I’ve realized that recovery from any life threatening condition is not something you can do on your own, because...you become mentally, physically and emotionally deprived of the fuel you need to recover fully.**

**This was the catalyst in setting up a non profit organization called Coming Home.**

**I view my stroke as a tree under whose shade I did not plan to sit. Nothing grows in the shade.”**



## Tony Finneran, Australia Stroke in 2013 aged 54

“Stroke Foundation Australia has helped me enormously. They are a highly professional team with an outstanding caring and empathetic workforce.

They built my confidence; guided me back from my 13 week stay in hospital; provided resources to other stroke survivors, families and carers; engaged me with research studies and provided opportunities for consumer leadership roles.

They trained me to become a StrokeSafe Ambassador delivering the FAST signs identification and also identify life style changes targeted to stroke prevention strategies.

Through the Stroke Foundation raising awareness, many lives have been saved.”





**Irene Tabanasi, Nigeria**  
**Stroke in 2017**

“After I had a stroke I lost my job and was left with severe disability and depression. I stayed indoors for months before seeing a private physiotherapist, but I stopped because of finances.

A nurse referred me to Stroke Action. I started attending the Life after Stroke Centre in 2020. My mobility and self confidence improved after a few sessions of rehabilitation and exercise training as well as psycho-social support.

I spoke at the World Stroke Congress 2021 about my recovery journey.

My advice to other stroke survivors is not to lose hope, and to engage in early rehabilitation.”

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**Haskell Small, USA**  
**Stroke in 2021 aged 72**

“I am a concert pianist and composer who suffered a haemorrhagic stroke in February last year.

I couldn't move my left side and thought I would never be able to play the piano again, but after counting my blessings – I was alive and my mind and speech remained intact - I became determined to recover as fully as possible.

At first I played arrangements for right-hand alone, and recently I have returned to playing concerts with both hands. I am now working towards my life-long goal of performing Beethoven's immensely difficult and sublime 'Diabelli Variations', a pursuit that has become a life-saving journey for me.”





**Song Chin Yen, Malaysia**  
**Caregiver**

“To me the National Stroke Association of Malaysia (NASAM) is a place where stroke survivors and their families find hope and motivation, enabling them to move forward.

Our mother Bang Ah Lan, now 77, had a stroke in July 2021. She made remarkable progress in six months. From being bedridden to independently walking in the house with minimal assistance.

We are grateful to the therapists at NASAM Perak who made this possible.

May NASAM continue to shine and bring hope to those in need.”

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**Ramon Montecillo, Canada**  
**Stroke in 2012 aged 55**

“A haemorrhagic stroke changed my life on December 7, 2012 at 55 years old.

While an in-patient at Eagle Ridge Hospital, I overheard the therapists were raising money for the Heart & Stroke Foundation for the Big Bike Ride.

This started my journey to volunteer, I have raised \$25,000 over five years, I’ve become a one-on-one peer support for stroke survivors for the last eight years and studied counselling.

Stroke changed my life and I found a new purpose in life of community service.”





**Ann Kinnish, United Kingdom**  
**Stroke in 2021 aged 49**

Ann's busy lifestyle of work, volunteering and running changed overnight when she had a stroke.

While receiving physiotherapy, she discovered the Stroke Association's My Stroke Guide online resource and the charity's four-week exercise programme.

"[The videos] were just the right length...I was able to find the level that sort of suited my ability at the time.

I now have full use of my arm back. Keep going, even when you think you're not making any progress. It's about remembering, whilst my legs are not doing great, I couldn't actually stand up and now I can move about."

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**Mr B S Royal, India**  
**79 year old caregiver**

**“When my wife, Mrs Thresamma had a stroke in 2013, our family was shattered. I was completely clueless as to how to manage, as was the family. Then I was told about the Dr Bindu Menon Foundation.**

**At the foundation, I have been a witness not only to my wife's recovery but also several other patients who are now regular attendees to the camps and other foundation activities.**

**The foundation has also instilled hope and boosted my morale and I am now confident that I can not only take care of my wife, I can also be a part of the mission towards stroke awareness. Thank you Dr Bindu Menon Foundation.”**

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**Elaine Godkin, Canada**  
**Stroke in 2017 aged 77**

It took a year before Elaine was able to read books or watch television again after her stroke. Finding March of Dimes Canada's Facebook group was "life-changing". She found others who were going through some of the same challenges she was. She also started attending 'After Stroke Community Conversation' to connect with other stroke survivors and caregivers.

Elaine credits these groups with reducing her feelings of isolation and loneliness, and sparking lasting friendships. "I would encourage anyone who has had a stroke to join these types of groups," says Elaine. "They have both changed my life for the better."



**Idriss Kassim, Malawi**  
**Stroke in 2021 aged 36**



“Am a lawyer by profession. I suffered a stroke when I was 36. I am in the process of recovering. The stroke support organization (SSO) in Malawi has been offering me advice on behavior change to prevent a recurrence. They have been involved in awareness campaigns, be it within our local SSO or at gatherings where I have a chance to speak. I raise awareness about stroke. The SSO is an important organisation where one can get the most important information that might not be available anywhere.”



## Alzbeta Husarovic, Slovakia

### Stroke in 2011

“I was 10 weeks pregnant when I had a stroke.

What inspired me to found the stroke association Porazka.sk? When I had a stroke, my husband tried to find information that could help me, but he couldn't find anything, at least not on Slovak websites.

When I came from hospital, I didn't even know what had happened to me. My husband explained and also said that he was looking for help, but he found nothing.

Therefore, I decided to fill the ‘hole on the internet’ and founded the website [www.porazka.sk](http://www.porazka.sk)

Many young people have no idea that a stroke exists and what serious consequences it can have. Not to mention the economic impact.”

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**Tay Sim Chong, Malaysia**  
**Stroke in 2013 aged 52**

**“I started rehab at National Stroke Association Malaysia (NASAM) Malacca on August 1, 2013, about seven months after my stroke.**

**It made a big difference to me to see many people with a stroke happily continuing their daily lives. I was affected by their laughter and happiness.**

**After a few sessions I became more confident and was driven with new hope to recover.**

**I was also able to join fellow stroke champions and their carers for chats. NASAM helped me to overcome my feeling of low self-esteem.”**





**Ogugua Akosa, Nigeria**  
**Stroke in 2014**

“I was left with severe disability, depression, demoralized, and lost my confidence. I didn’t start rehabilitation immediately because I had no knowledge of it. I couldn’t do anything on my own without support from my family.

I started attending Stroke Action Life after Stroke Centre in 2018. I stopped using mobility equipment after two months of rehabilitation and exercise training. I could confidently walk around and interact with other people. I also went back to raising a family and had a son in 2021.

My advice to other stroke survivors is to never give up, and be sure to engage in rehabilitation immediately after stroke.”



## Roger Raymond, United Kingdom Stroke in 2018 aged 45

For Roger, from Croydon, UK, returning to his career in public affairs was a huge step after a stroke in 2018 left him with aphasia.

“I went from drafting ministers’ letters and policy reports to not being able to write. It was a huge sense of loss.

The Stroke Association guided me through the hardest of times. I went through seven months of speech and language therapy. With the support of Jack, my Stroke Association Support Coordinator, my speech began coming back quicker than I expected.

To be able to return to work was a major relief.”





**Nadica Shikoska Simidzioska, North Macedonia**  
**Stroke in 2021 aged 31**

“I had a stroke one year ago. It started with a very strong headache, than I started to vomit and lost consciousness.

The diagnosis of stroke was established one day later. It was a period without appropriate therapy for prevention of recurrent stroke.

If I had known more about stroke I might have intervened on time.

Stroke can be prevented if signs are recognized on time!”



**Eric Knapp, New Zealand**  
**Stroke in 2014 aged 33**

**“I was an extremely fit firefighter, but I had to outlive 13 strokes, of which three were major strokes.**

**Initially, I was told that I might never be able to talk, swallow or move my left side again. Nine years later, I work for the Stroke Foundation of New Zealand as a Community Stroke Advisor. This is my dream job, I'm able to pass on really solid knowledge that could help other people affected by stroke. I tell my clients that recovery is a marathon, not a sprint!”**

**On Eric's left arm sleeve, he has a beautiful fox tattooed, which holds special meaning to him.**

**"The fox reminds me that I outfoxed this condition - that I'm still standing."**





**Lilli Law, Canada**

**Stroke in 2019 aged 45**

From the moment Lilli connected with an After Stroke Coordinator, she felt well taken care of. “I’m very thankful. She didn’t miss a beat and led me through a universe of sessions and programs available to me.”

Lilli found ‘her people’ in After Stroke’s Young Stroke Survivors Group, peers experiencing similar challenges. Connecting with a peer support volunteer for one-on-one calls has also proven significant in her stroke recovery journey, providing a place to share with no judgement. “The After Stroke program is beyond helpful. Helpful doesn’t do it justice. They have saved me.”



## Simon Chifamba, Zimbabwe Stroke in 2014

“My recovery was like a yoyo. It has taken time but am almost there. Am doing everything on my own. I always wanted to be independent.

What motivated me most was my son Tanatswa. He would take away my wheelchair at first, then my walking stick and ask me to walk with him.

My memory was affected so I forget what I want to do or say or don't remember people I don't see very often. I shy away from gatherings because I don't want to embarrass myself. I am now spending most of my free time at the farm which I am passionate about.

I want to encourage other survivors not to despair but keep on with exercising. You will make a positive contribution to society.”



**Carine Chia, Singapore**  
**Stroke in 2009 aged 29**

“I searched for information on a stroke association. I came to the Singapore National Stroke Association (SNSA).

They have talks, which provide more information on how to improve my health situation. There are kind therapists to provide simple therapy and I can do this with a group of friends. Then I’m never alone doing therapy.

Activities like art and crafts where I’m encouraged to use my able hand, building up my confidence. Simple cooking and it’s healthy too. Dancing and movement using our able side and maintaining balance.

All these activities make us feel more alive.”





**Ghislain Mutabaruka, Rwanda**  
**Stroke in 2015 aged 31**

“I got paresthesia in my left leg and felt so weak, but took this for fatigue. I immediately went to bed. I woke up two days later with weakness in my left hand, leg and face.

My neighbour took me to hospital where I received intensive care. As it took time to reach hospital, the complications have been destructive and affected my life. I didn't give up and I started physiotherapy.

Stroke Action Rwanda gave me confidence. I bonded with other stroke survivors and it proved to me that my situation was not a curse. Despite the progress, I missed job opportunities and some relationships deteriorated, but after stroke life goes on.”

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**Mira Orosel, Slovenia**  
**Stroke in 1996 aged 29**

“I had my family with two children, a great job and was an active athlete. My life was perfect and suddenly, I was in a wheelchair, retired, depressed.

I joined the local stroke club Ptuj. Gradually, I got back my will to live.

In 2018, after a roundtable about people with additional needs, the idea sprung to open a stroke club in my town, Slovenska Bistrica. I have been its president since then.

Since I have been involved with stroke clubs, I have learned effective ways of communication and how to use a computer. Within our stroke club we create an environment where we are all accepted and understood.”





**Jonathan Arevalo, Canada**  
**Stroke in 2021 aged 35**

Jonathan is passionate about his work as a volunteer with After Stroke. As a peer support volunteer, he shares his lived experience – providing hope, encouragement and information to stroke survivors who recently returned home. “Volunteering has opened doors in my own life. It’s a great opportunity to connect with people, and by helping someone you help yourself too”. He’s grateful for the chance to volunteer and the work done by March of Dimes Canada. “It’s an excellent non-profit, with lots of opportunities for stroke survivors and caregivers to find support.”





**Emma Beesley, Australia**  
**Stroke in 2016 aged 33**

“Being a part of the Stroke Foundation Young Stroke Project has connected me with other young stroke survivors and helped me feel less alone. I can freely share my problems and feelings and they understand me.

The Stroke Foundation has also encouraged and supported me in my quest to spread awareness and understanding about living with aphasia.

**Thankyou Stroke Foundation!”**





## Alan Thompson, United Kingdom Stroke in 2018 aged 71

Alan, from south Wales, UK, experienced the “deepest, darkest moment” he’d known following his stroke.

He embraced exercise in recovery and has returned to his much-loved hobby, bowls.

“I found out about an initiative run by the Stroke Association called Movement to Music, where you exercise to music while sitting in a chair. This not only showed me that there were plenty of movements I could still do, but increased my confidence and willingness to get more active.

It made me realise that life was not over - I could do things I thought I’d never do again.”





**Minka Rožman, Slovenia**  
**Stroke in 2009 aged 55**

**“I celebrated my 55th birthday in hospital, a few days after a stroke. It happened during my sleep and the right side of my body was paralysed.**

**After my hospital stay, I had rehab in Spa Laško and joined a local stroke club on my return home. I have realized that this is an important, long-lasting social network for me.**

**I have had eight recurrent strokes since my first one and I have hardly missed any club meeting, unless I was in hospital.**

**I like it since we are all equal - stroke survivors, family members, volunteers.”**





**Mark Ford, New Zealand**  
**Stroke in 2019 aged 40**

“I was really fit and an avid ultramarathon runner when I had my stroke. An undiagnosed hole in my heart allowed a clot to enter the bloodstream and lodge in my brain.

Initially, I was paralysed along the entire left side, lost my ability to speak and swallow, had trouble keeping my eyes open and was stricken by severe migraines.

It was horrible for my young children to see me knocked down. My sole focus was getting better, for them. Within five months, I started doing one of my favourite hobbies again - running.

The hardest part of recovering is holding onto the memory of who you were before your stroke and grieving about that loss. Once you move past that, the possibilities are endless.”

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**Revayi, Zimbabwe**  
**Stroke in 2014 aged 34**

“I was in hospital for a week then discharged to a rehabilitation centre. I stayed for six weeks and then started my rehabilitation as an outpatient. Progress was fast in the first days then it slowed down. I kept on doing my exercises and I still see some recovery.

I had a baby girl six years post stroke. I still walk with a limp but I am unstoppable. I keep on soldiering on knowing one day I will put on my heels that I love so much. My toes only started moving two years ago and I know I will keep on recovering.

To other stroke survivors I say keep on keeping on. I am back at work and I still enjoy what I do. I celebrate each milestone achieved as if it is the first.”





**Mirzet Shuman, North Macedonia**  
**Stroke in 2020 aged 36**

**“I am a teacher, I had a stroke two years ago. It started with speech impairment and increased blood pressure.**

**I was hospitalized at the Clinic of Neurology for 15 days and all detailed analysis and investigations were carried out.**

**I managed to recover and to return to my everyday work activities.**

**I am very thankful to the medical staff of the clinic of neurology, especially nurse Gordana and Professor Anita for their professional engagement and psychological support to continue with my life.”**

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**Janet Yeo, Malaysia**

**Stroke in 1989 aged 44**

Founder National Stroke Association of Malaysia (NASAM)

**“At NASAM we advocate prompt rehabilitation for the stroke survivor and counselling for the carer.**

**Over the years we have encouraged and guided thousands of stroke survivors and their families to begin a new journey and to celebrate life after stroke.**

**NASAM has succeeded despite huge challenges because we have remained very focused on our mission. We wish to be able to continue serving the stroke community in Malaysia for many more years to come.**

**We want to give stroke champions a second chance to live life to the fullest no matter what the odds!”**





**Joseph Rukelibuga, Rwanda**  
**Stroke in 2016 aged 57**

“My wife rushed me to the nearest referral hospital. I was diagnosed with ischemic stroke. After five days of hospital stay, I was discharged home in a wheelchair.

I then attended several rehabilitation sessions per week. That was a good opportunity to meet other stroke survivors. Together we created Stroke Action Rwanda, a SSO that is becoming a driving force to end stigma, restore hope and break the silence on stroke in Rwanda.

I left the wheelchair, I am well and confident in the future despite hemiparesis.”



**Tatjana Rotar, Slovenia**  
**Stroke in 1995 aged 21**

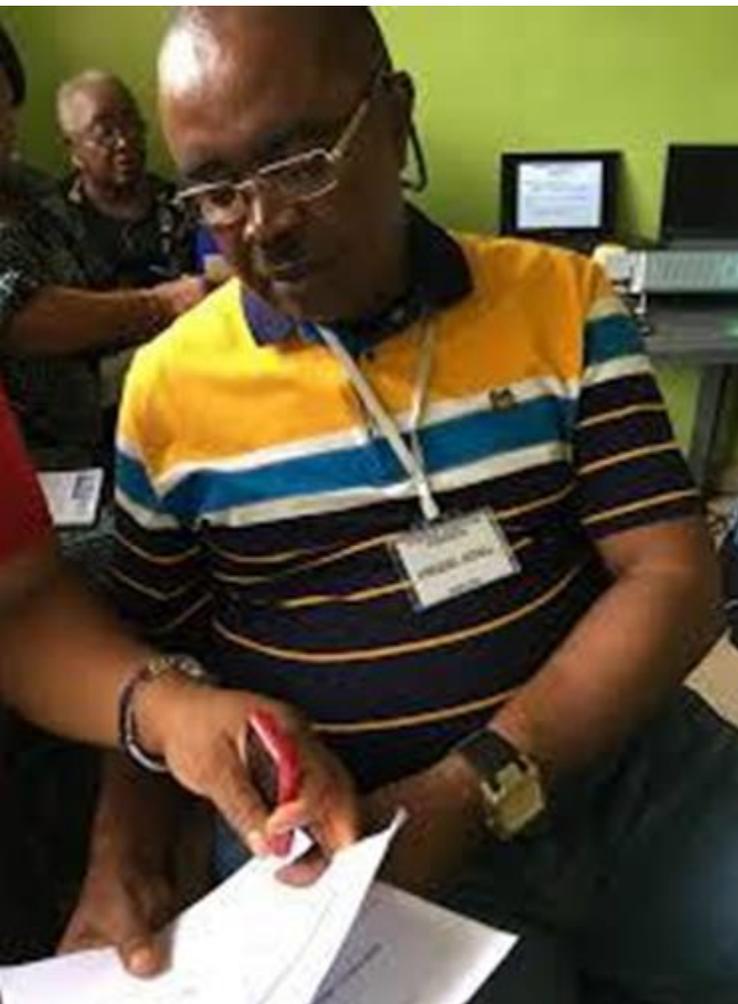
“My life has changed completely. I am now retired and have become a very active member of the stroke club in Ljubljana.

Rehabilitation has helped me a lot and I keep getting better still. Within the club, I participate in all sports activities, I enjoy walking although my performances are different after stroke. I have also learned to paint on silk.

I am happy to volunteer to any study related to stroke and like working with students. Within the stroke club I also meet many stroke survivors around Slovenia. These gatherings mean a lot to me.”

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**Vincent Ochili, Nigeria**  
**Stroke in 2018**

“After I had a stroke I was devastated and depressed because I could not do the things I used to do.

After I was discharged, a friend referred me to Stroke Action. Without hesitating I started attending the Life after Stroke Centre where I received rehabilitation and psycho-social support.

I was able to gain back my confidence and mobility. I was supported by Stroke Action to become a peer-coach and stroke entrepreneur. Now I have returned to my business.

My advice to other stroke survivors who think it is impossible to achieve - it is very possible because I benefited from it and Stroke Action is the best place.”

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## Suja Arunkumar, Singapore Stroke in 2016

“I suffered two strokes and was completely bedridden. I never gave up hope and it was the support from my family and health care providers that I got up on my feet and started moving again.

One of the biggest contributions to my recovery was my interest in music and art. I would sketch a lot of my emotions on canvas and participated in online singing.

Singapore National Stroke Association (SNSA) has also given me ample opportunities to showcase my talents.

I'm really grateful to my caregivers and SNSA who have always motivated me to surge forward.”

Suja (right) with her daughter and husband

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**Gururaj, India**  
**Stroke in 2017**

“The day I suffered a stroke, we cannot forget. I got convulsions. Then I went into a deep sleep. My wife wanted to take me to the doctor after I woke up. I had no idea of stroke. When I woke up I could not move my right side or speak. We went to the hospital. The doctor confirmed it was a stroke and I started treatment.

More awareness of stroke and its effects are required in the public.

Stroke Support India sessions are interactive, informative, motivating and eye opening. I am happy to be part of this group.”

Gururaj has Broca’s aphasia and right side hemiparesis.



**Jennie Williamson, New Zealand**  
**Stroke in 2007 aged 48**

“Fifteen years ago, I was a bit miffed about having a sinus infection, as the pain had caused me to take a sick day for the very first time in my life.

Eventually, I felt a wicked ache, as if someone had placed a red-hot poker right on my temple. After my stroke, my entire left side was paralysed, and I could neither move my arm nor leg on that side.

I joined a gym to get back to doing what I loved. A decade later, I won Gold in an over-60s bodybuilding competition.

Competing in my golden years is not to boost my ego. I want every stroke survivor to know that exercise unlocked my rehabilitation potential.”

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**Tam Hong Ching, Malaysia**  
**Stroke in 2018 aged 31**

“Two weeks after leaving hospital, I joined National Stroke Association Malaysia (NASAM). I limped into the centre with my brother’s help.

I began with one-on-one therapy, but after three sessions I joined a group. Exercising daily with other stroke survivors was fun and motivational.

After one month I could walk independently on the treadmill. Soon I regained my confidence. I also started to focus on re-training as a driver, so I could return to work.

Only after weeks of dedicated practise was I allowed to drive independently. I started by working shorter hours, and these days my shifts are longer, but I make sure I have ample rest.”





**Samira Umutoni, Rwanda**  
**Stroke in 2015 aged 19**

**“I was only 19 when I fell into a coma. The screening tested negative until the end of one month and revealed the damage in my brain.**

**I came out with a left hemiplegia and lived in a dilemma of what's going on, until I met Stroke Action Rwanda.**

**2018 is when I got the opportunity to meet fellow survivors and medical officers who explained what stroke really is.**

**I'm grateful for all the support that kept me up because all in all, I'm not a victim but a survivor!”**

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**Zdenko Rajnar, Slovenia**  
**Stroke in 2006 aged 43**

“After two months of intensive stroke rehabilitation, I joined a local club where I am now a president.

Becoming a president was a totally new role for me, before I would never believe that I can be a leader.

Being part of the bigger family of stroke survivors and receiving knowledge and skills from the leaders, being able to have additional rehabilitation even years after stroke, is very important for me. I have also benefited from involvement into stroke related research.

In our club we have an active physical activity section, chess section, bowling. Organizing and participating in them gives me great satisfaction.”





**Maria Knight, United Kingdom**  
**Stroke in 2020 aged 51**

A severe stroke left Maria paralysed down her left side and unable to walk properly. She struggled with depression. Stroke Association support has helped her tackle the life-changing impact of her stroke.

“The Stroke Association have been tremendous, especially my stroke support coordinator Marie. She checked on me every week and gave me lots of useful information to help with my recovery.

I also had weekly phone calls from a Stroke Association volunteer through their Here for You scheme and chat online to other stroke survivors which has really inspired me.”





**Damien Lee, Singapore**  
**Stroke in 2016**

“I’m using working as part of my exercise, doing leg strength exercise, using the slop to walk up and down exercise.

Drawing can help to concentrate, relax your mind and also help to improve hand and finger movement.

If possible do what you love and from there also can help to improve it.

Important thing is never give up.”





**Sanja Pendovska, North Macedonia**  
**Stroke in 2015 aged 35**

“Days before I felt extreme fatigue, dizziness and severe headache. It was not something that worried me, so I overlooked the symptoms. My family got really worried when I started vomiting non-stop and convinced me to go to hospital the next morning. I fell into a coma that night, lasting 10 days. I was hospitalized for a month.

It was difficult to acknowledge I had a stroke so young. I was determined to fight and regain my capabilities. My recovery progressed gradually with ongoing rehabilitation. I still feel the difference in my body from time to time. But now I am not ignoring any sign and I can face what happened. The most important thing is that I am alive and I am pretty thankful for that!”

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**Joseph Bonesha, Rwanda**

**Stroke in 2008 aged 47**

Former Ambassador of Rwanda in Belgium

**“That night I slept so peacefully and I woke up in hospital. I was told I had a stroke.**

**I started to ask myself: why me, why was my right side affected (I am right-handed), how will my family live? The difficulties were there and I could not escape! The solution that came to my mind was suicide. Quite simply.**

**As the days passed, things changed, new decisions were made. I no longer wanted to leave my family.**

**I met stroke survivors with the idea of creating Stroke Action Rwanda. We have new friends, the community comes first. The circle of friends is growing nationally and internationally. The desire to live returns, increases and is strong.”**

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## Atika Ahmad, Singapore Stroke in 2021

“Realising the need for support group, I joined Singapore National Stroke Association (SNSA). I got motivation from my befriender and other stroke survivors.

Attending programmes empowers me physically, mentally and spiritually. I also gain self confidence by sharing my own experience, conducting cooking classes and becoming a befriender.

Getting to know other stroke survivors adds colour to my life. Stroke is not the end of one's life after all. It's an opening to many new experiences.”

Atika (second left)

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**Phoenix Ruka, New Zealand**  
**Stroke in 2020 aged 30**

“I was out on a run with some colleagues when I was suddenly gripped by a spell of dizziness. Although my first instinct was to ‘tough it out like any Kiwi bloke’, two female colleagues intuitively called an ambulance and got me to the hospital fast.

I was working part-time as a personal trainer and could never have anticipated that I was suffering a stroke. Those first few days were rough, I went down a deep rabbit hole thinking this was going to be my life now, that I was finished. Five days later, however, I was walking again.

I was in a dark place initially, but unrelenting support from my family helped me come out the other side.”





**Jelka Košič, Slovenia**  
**Stroke in 2007 aged 45**

“I had been volunteering in the fire brigade when I suddenly felt a strong pain in my head and it was getting worse. The health services reacted quickly but I had a long hospital and rehabilitation stay.

I have been positive all along and have been fighting for every little improvement in my functioning. After my rehab ended, I joined the local stroke club Črenšovci. I have been attending monthly meetings, various lectures, organized walks, and craft workshops.

My husband also joined the club, and we’ve met several other stroke survivors and also made new friendships.”





**Charles Karangwa, Rwanda**  
**Stroke in 2013 aged 43**

**“The stroke that struck me was haemorrhagic. Following this stroke I spent three weeks in hospital.**

**I was left with left hemiplegia. From the day after my stroke to today, I undergo regular physiotherapy sessions.**

**For almost four years now, we have an association with fellow stroke survivors. This association allows us to flourish by exchanging experience and especially by advocating for stroke patients.**

**On a personal level, this association brought me out of loneliness and anxiety”.**

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**Sylvia Poh, Singapore**  
**Caregiver**

“I am caregiver to my hubby, Richard, who has been a stroke survivor with aphasia for nine years.

Being a caregiver is never easy because I am always doing my best to help him recover and understand him, and I do feel stressed out from time to time. Therefore, it is important that we caregivers have channels to turn to for support.

My supports come from my family and friends, my religion and God, my hobbies and exercise and Singapore National Stroke Association who I have been with for eight years.

As fellow caregivers, let's stay in-touch to support and encourage each other.”





**Hannah Paterson, New Zealand**  
**Stroke in 2022 aged 31**

“I experienced my stroke at work, when I was leading a reading group in my classroom. I was sitting on the floor with a group of kids when I felt the walls closing in and sensed my sound become warped like I was plunged underwater.

I knew something was really wrong when I looked down and saw my left hand resting on my chest but could not feel it. I experienced all three of the FAST signs.

People don't expect strokes to happen to someone young, but they can happen to anyone at any age. This is why awareness drives like the Stroke Foundation of New Zealand's FAST campaign are so important.”





**Yankee Omini Eteng, Nigeria**  
**Stroke in 2019**

**“I had a stroke and also have Parkinson’s disease for over 3 years now.**

**I have found it difficult to walk and gain balance and I was also having slurred speech. I have spent a lot of money on medication.**

**A few months ago I met a dietitian who is also an ambassador with Stroke Care International, who is now giving me the right advice.**

**I am gradually gaining balance and movement, still doing my exercises too.”**





**Diane Finnegan, United Kingdom**  
**Stroke in 2020 aged 70**

Struggling to come to terms with her stroke, Diane, of Hertfordshire, UK, was linked in with Stroke Association Coordinator Linda, who encouraged her to embrace her love of art to aid her recovery.

Diane said: “Talking to Linda, I felt I’d finally found someone who could listen and understand what I was feeling.”

I still don’t paint the way I did before my stroke. But I have managed to try other styles, which I think is retraining my brain. I also joined an art club for inspiration and company. This is helping me to move forward.”

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**Dennis Busulwa, Uganda**  
**Stroke in 2019 aged 42**

**“My stroke happened whilst attending a wedding. The CT scan showed I had a clot on the right side of my brain.**

**I was in a wheelchair for about four months with intense physiotherapy. In Uganda stroke hasn’t gotten enough publicity yet so there are limited support systems, though we have rehabilitation centres that offer physiotherapy.**

**Exercise has been a major contributor to my recovery. I was in a wheelchair but can now walk with a stick.”**





**Dannielle Hayes, Canada**  
**Stroke in 2010 aged 67**

Dannielle has travelled to more than 80 countries as a professional photographer. After her stroke, she adapted her approach to photography, moving from her heavy camera to an iPhone she can comfortably operate with one hand.

She says, “There is only one life so make the most of it.”

Dannielle rarely misses a virtual stroke recovery program held by After Stroke BC, in partnership with March of Dimes Canada. The group participates in learning activities, physical exercise and other activities to promote recovery.

Photo taken by Dannielle

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## Narada Amarasinghe, Sri Lanka Stroke in 2022 aged 55

“On 21st July, I woke to find my lower and upper limbs were paralysed. I realized it was a stroke as both my parents had strokes. I called my brother to help me. As I was admitted to hospital with an eight hour delay, I was not eligible for thrombolysis.

I would like to emphasize that time is precious and matters for the treatment of stroke.

After two months I am able to walk with minor support and do daily activities with minimum help. Being a member of the Stroke Support Organization for Sri Lankans (SSOS) gives me a platform to meet other stroke survivors. Thank you SSOS for giving me new hope to my new life.”





**Jessica Penberthy, New Zealand**  
**Stroke in 2017 aged 28**

“As I was so young at the time, it took a few days before someone in the hospital decided to scan my brain.

I was watching TV with my partner two years later, when I stood up and the whole room started spinning – it was my second stroke, which needed emergency surgery.

Twelve weeks later, I was in observation at a hospital when I had my third stroke. Since then, I’ve had to relearn to write, walk, work on my balance, and rebuild muscle strength.

I’m committed to supporting the Stroke Foundation of New Zealand’s services and signed up to represent the foundation at the Auckland Marathon this year!”

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**Denis Hamel, Canada**  
**Stroke in 2019 aged 59**

Denis highlights the value of After Stroke's Ask an Expert sessions, sharing that the webinars have "pushed me a lot further ahead in my recovery".

Each session invites an expert to share information, inspiration and resources for stroke recovery. Topics change each session.

"I can't thank March of Dimes Canada enough for what they've done," says Denis. "They've been such a valuable part of my recovery. I tell anyone I meet who has had a stroke that 'you've got to reach out and sign up for their (After Stroke) program'. It's been worth my time many times over."

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**Marijana Pogačar, Slovenia**  
**Stroke in 2001 aged 49**

“I was 49, working, and thought that my life had been torn into pieces. After hospital I went to rehabilitation and met stroke survivors like myself. I found inspiration in the attitudes of some, being positive and highly motivated for their own neuro rehabilitation.

Stroke survivors were important for me and so I joined a local stroke club. I enjoyed monthly events and after 18 years of membership I was elected as a president of our local club in Bled.

I have accepted this with great pleasure as I enjoyed working with people and by my attitude may support others survivors, and show them how we can be stronger when joining together.”





**Stephen Thompson, United Kingdom**  
**Stroke in 2020 aged 65**

“I was a mathematician and teacher. I could explain mathematical problems in many different ways and I found that very satisfying. After the stroke, in spite of intensive therapy, I cannot communicate my ideas clearly so I can't teach any more.

An older friend has inspired me to paint in oils, giving me great tips on how to do it well. Life is more relaxed now, I can pick up a paintbrush at any time and do a bit more.

Art has made life enjoyable again.”





**Joanne Lim, Malaysia**  
**Stroke in 2019 aged 36**

“National Stroke Association of Malaysia (NASAM) was recommended to me by an online friend. I started my one-on-one rehab sessions there twice a week with physiotherapist Ashley, in September 2019, about four months after my stroke. I was wheelchair bound then. After three months I joined group sessions so that I could connect with other stroke survivors and improve on my confidence.”





**Riitta and Jukka Fabrin, Finland**  
**Stroke in 2016 aged 57**

“Music is our common language. Music serves as mine and my husband Jukka's language even when communicating is difficult due to Jukka's aphasia. Jukka has played guitar all his life and he picked it up again immediately after a stroke. We were pleased that the stroke did not affect playing much. We play music together at home and sometimes we go to group singing. Thanks to persistent speech therapy, Jukka also succeeds in speaking, reading and writing. Jukka participates in the aphasia group, and I am in the family peer group. It's not good to think about things alone. You get a lot of strength from peer support.”

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**Saviour Hanamwiinga, Zambia**  
**Stroke in 2003 aged 18**

“When I had my stroke I had no idea what a stroke was or any knowledge about it.

It took me two weeks to walk on my own, with difficulties of course.

I was the youngest when I went to physiotherapy but I kept my fighting spirit and kept pushing forward. I have not heard of a stroke support organization in my country until I knew about National Stroke Aid. I am now a member of the organization.

Due to my stroke I learned the value of exercise and it is now part of my daily life. I’m not a victim I’m a survivor.”





**Feliz Vinicio Lora, Dominican Republic**  
**Stroke in 2010 aged 47**

‘I am a journalist, broadcaster, lawyer and producer of radio and television programs. I suffered a stroke when I was president of the Association of Art Writers of the Dominican Republic.

I was left with paralysis, global aphasia and cognitive problems. In 2012, I founded the Dominican Cerebral Accident Foundation (Fundace), with the mission of educating the population on prevention and helping survivors most in need.

I give talks in communities, schools and universities. In each town we create a CLUB ACV and train Facilitators-Multipliers in Prevention.”



**Kariny Brey Pereira, Brazil**  
**Daughter**

“My father Milton was always an active man who practiced sports and tried to have a healthy diet. He played musical instruments.

In 2012 we were caught by surprise when he had an ischemic stroke, and soon after a second one, this time haemorrhagic. My dad was hospitalized for 51 days, with a slow and gradual recovery. He got a lot of attention from the physiotherapy team, who even took musical instruments to stimulate him.

Today my father is retired and life goes on with quality. The feeling is of gratitude to the team of Dr Carla and nurses of the stroke department of São José Hospital, who always treated us with a lot of love, affection, respect, dedication and commitment to my father’s life. They showed every life matters, even when chances are small.”

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**Andy Cloud, United Kingdom**  
**Stroke in 2018 aged 58**

Support from the Stroke Association and loved ones helped determined Andy of Southsea, UK, get back on his feet after a stroke left him struggling to communicate and unable to walk.

Andy's wife, Janice, said: "Andy's mobility is affected; but he can walk now and uses an exercise bike to keep fit.

We will be forever grateful for the wonderful care and support that Andy received in hospital and from the Stroke Association. When you're suddenly faced with something as terrifying as a stroke, having someone on a personal level tell you everything will be okay makes such a difference."





**Vera Tucovič, Slovenia**  
**Stroke in 2005 aged 44**

**“My diagnosis was confirmed rather late as I did not have any symptoms and also did not need rehabilitation.**

**I was introduced to a local stroke club by a friend in 2006 and have become a president in 2007. Since then, I still run our stroke club. Never before, especially in the first years after stroke, have I seen myself as a leader. But it works!**

**Being very active within the club and liaising regularly with our Stroke Support Organisation, I have become knowledgeable about all aspects of stroke.**

**And I have made several new friendships across Slovenia.”**





**Said Majaliwa, Tanzania**  
**Stroke in 2020 aged 55**

Said's stroke has affected all aspects of his life – socially, economically as well as his health. Continuing his work as a carpenter is difficult as one of his hands has been affected.

With limited resources to access hospital physiotherapy, Said concentrated on home exercises and community physiotherapy to support his recovery.

One of the big challenges for stroke survivors in Tanzania is access to public transport, as there is always a rush to find a seat.

Following his stroke, Said is passionate about the importance of good health “if you have a good health you can do everything.”





**Heidi Jäkälä, Finland**  
**Stroke in 2018 aged 26**

**“Art is important to me. A stroke changed my life four years ago. I had to learn everything again and drop out of business studies.**

**Although I couldn't speak or write in the first years, painting went well. The hobby of art has always been important to me, and after I got sick for the first time, I painted in the hospital.**

**The fact that I was right-handed and now I had to learn everything with my left hand brought challenges. I make colourful watercolour paintings, and the subjects are related to nature. It would be great if I found my profession in art in the future.”**





**Alice-R Ekima Mbango, Cameroon**  
**Stroke in 2001 aged 57**

“I remember it as if it were yesterday! In the middle of work in my office, I felt a big discomfort then a kind of ball in my head, parts of my body seemed to let go of me. I wanted to pull my leg from under the table, but no longer felt it.

Much later I understood it was a stroke and that more could have been done with quicker diagnosis. From a person full of life, active and very autonomous, I became something to clean and feed, having lost all autonomy and privacy because your life is left in other people's hands and mood.

We were in total ignorance and I decided to devote the little energy that remains to me drawing attention to stroke and the Cameroon Stroke Association was born.”

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**Christian Pese, New Zealand**  
**Stroke in 2021 aged 18**

“I experienced a stroke during a [rugby league] game. Everything was going normally, but in the last ten minutes, I began feeling dizzy and collapsed.

When I finally woke up, I couldn't move, and when I heard it was a stroke, I was scared because my Nana had been paralysed after a stroke.

Before it happened, I almost knew nothing about strokes and the signs. I never thought anything like that would happen to me.

I was told that I might not be able to walk again, but that lit a fire in me to keep pushing with all my physio and my rehab. Earlier this year, I'm back to playing varsity, along with some rugby on the weekends.”





**Alexia Kountouri, Cyprus**  
**Stroke in 2015 aged 27**

**“I am an ambassador for stroke in Cyprus standing next to stroke survivors and their families.**

**My right side was paralyzed. Being a stroke survivor, I have spent some time to get familiarised with my disability and develop ways of adapting, coping and solving problems. I believe this attitude has contributed to my positive approach to life.**

**My education included an MSc in Social Research Methods from Sussex University, UK. I am focusing on raising awareness and educating others on stroke in young people.**

**I hold a range of interests and hobbies. Some of my favourites are yoga and creating a blog for young survivors and reclaiming their lives after stroke.”**

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