

Speaker profile: Professor Marion Walker

Professor Marion Walker, Professor of Stroke Rehabilitation at the University of Nottingham, will review the long-term management of stroke patients in her talk *Stroke: the way forward* at GM's conference on 19th October 2011. Talking to Dawn Powell, she explains why rehabilitation is so important. For more information about the GM conference, see page 320 or visit www.gerimed.co.uk/conference.

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Stroke is a major cause of death and disability. About 53,000 people die each year in the UK because of a stroke and there are about 450,000 people who are living with a severe disability because of a stroke.

It is now widely recognised, by both the Department of Health and healthcare professionals, that stroke rehabilitation units are absolutely vital to reducing this risk of death and long-term disability. Professor Marion Walker says that even the very elderly should be treated on a stroke unit. "Trial data show that age is not a factor in a patient

benefitting from rehabilitation, so there should be no age limit on stroke units."

Another key issue for Professor Walker is that rehabilitation and long-term care should be better managed. "We need to move beyond seeing rehabilitation and care as something that happens in the first few days, weeks, or months after a stroke." She explains that long-term management involves reassessing the patient for opportunities to further improve their function or for opportunities to maintain their existing level of function.

The focus of long-term management should not just be on the physical effects of a stroke but also on the psychological effects as these are equally important. "A third of patients will become depressed within a year. Understanding how a stroke affects the mental wellbeing of a patient is key to ensuring that they are able to have a meaningful life." She adds that enabling patients to have a full and rewarding life after a stroke is the ultimate goal of rehabilitation management.

Statistics are from the Stroke Association.

Box 1: Biography



Professor Marion Walker, an occupational therapist by professional background, is Professor of Stroke Rehabilitation at the University of Nottingham. She has led several stroke rehabilitation research projects over the past 25 years (including therapy provision for nursing homes) and currently leads a team of more than 20 people in the Stroke Rehabilitation Theme of the NIHR Collaboration for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care for Nottingham, Derbyshire, and Lincolnshire. Professor Walker is also a Trustee of the Stroke Association and Associate Director of UK Stroke Research Network.