

MEDIA RELEASE

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Demystifying clot retrieval – new video describes life-saving technique

Stroke affects at least 9,000 New Zealanders every year. It's the major cause of long-term disability and third major cause of death after heart disease and all cancers combined.

This World Stroke Day, the Neurological Foundation has released a video featuring experts explaining a state-of-the-art medical procedure known as clot retrieval and offering tips for patients and their whānau who've experienced it.

View the video [here](#)

The Neurological Foundation Chair in Clinical Neurology, Professor Alan Barber, says the procedure is done under emergency circumstances, and patients often wake up afterwards, not knowing what has happened. Their loved ones, too, can feel confused and unsure.

"This new video is particularly useful for anyone who has experienced clot retrieval themselves, or had a loved one go through it," says Alan. "They can watch it once the acute danger has passed and learn more about this potentially life-saving treatment."

Ten years ago, New Zealand was one of the first places in the world to roll out clot retrieval treatment to patients, with life-changing results. The procedure, which involves sucking the clot from where it is lodged in the brain, can take as little as 10 minutes, or up to an hour. One in five patients who have this treatment return home as healthy as they were before the stroke.

As well as Auckland City Hospital, clot retrieval is also carried out at Wellington and Christchurch hospitals, meaning Kiwis across NZ can access the treatment.

Clot retrieval: "A miracle"

In September 2024, Ian Ramsay was rushed by ambulance early on a Saturday morning to Auckland City Hospital where he underwent clot-retrieval. His wife, Lorraine, says family members feared the worst. However, after some hours Ian woke up from the procedure, recognised the family and was progressively able to talk with them and move about. After just two nights, he was sent home.

"It was like a miracle," says Lorraine. "We'd never heard of this procedure. While waiting for the clot retrieval team to arrive, the doctor described it in detail. He said this was the biggest

advance in medicine in years. After that, I had total confidence that this procedure would work. Ian was going to be all right – and he was.”

The CEO of the Neurological Foundation, Rich Easton, says, “This video is part of the Foundation’s strategy to share brain health education with all New Zealanders. Hosted on our website, it is accessible and free for anyone to watch and share.”

Alan says the video has already received positive feedback from hospital staff who see it as a helpful ‘explainer’ for patients and stressed loved ones.

Alan and Rich have jointly acknowledged and thanked the experts who took part in the video alongside Alan: Hyper Acute Stroke Unit (HASU) nurse Alexia Beeslaar; neurology registrar Dr Shilpan Patel; and interventional neuro-radiologists Dr Shane Lee and Dr Matthew Page.

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About stroke:

- **Ischemic stroke:** This type happens when a blood vessel supplying the brain becomes blocked or clogged by a blood clot or fatty plaque. It accounts for roughly **85% to 87%** of all strokes.
- **Hemorrhagic stroke:** This type of stroke happens when a weakened blood vessel in the brain bursts and leaks blood into or around the surrounding brain tissue. It accounts for roughly **13% to 15%** of all strokes.

About clot retrieval:

- Ten years ago, New Zealand was one of the first places in the world to roll out this treatment to patients.
- Now, more than 4,000 patients from across the country – 30% of those flown in by helicopter – have been treated with stroke clot retrieval in Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch. This has resulted in an extra 1,200-plus people who are better than they would have been without this treatment, and over 500 who’ve avoided expensive hospital-level care. One in five have returned home as healthy as they were before the stroke.
- Professor Alan Barber, the Neurological Foundation Chair in Clinical Neurology (NFCCN), has been instrumental in transforming stroke treatment in New Zealand, and globally. He has been on multiple national and international committees, including the Global Stroke Quality and Guidelines Advisory Committee.
- In total, the Foundation has given \$7M towards the NFCCN team and awarded another \$1.7M in research grants to projects that Alan and his team have been involved in.

Where to go for help following a stroke:

- Have you or a loved one been impacted by a stroke? Once you've been discharged from hospital you may still need ongoing support.
- Stroke Aotearoa NZ is there to help you with the next steps on this journey. Go to:
<https://www.stroke.org.nz/>