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NEWS RELEASE

May is Stroke Awareness Month

What health condition is treatable if symptoms are identified F.A.S.T.? Stroke. May is Stroke Awareness Month. The Otsego County Health Department encourages everyone to learn more about the signs and symptoms of a stroke and the importance of getting medical help without delay if you suspect the onset of a stroke.

A stroke is a sudden interruption in the blood supply to the brain. Most strokes are caused by an abrupt blockage of arteries leading to the brain. Other strokes are caused by bleeding into brain tissue when a blood vessel bursts.

Up to 80 percent of strokes are preventable, yet more than 750,000 Americans suffer strokes each year.

The most common sign of stroke is sudden weakness of the face, arm or leg, most often on one side of the body.

Other warning signs can include:

- Sudden numbness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body.
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding speech.
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes.
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination.
- Sudden severe headache with no known cause.

In recent years, stroke deaths have declined in the United States by 10,000. This year, the Otsego County Health Department hopes to further reduce stroke deaths and disability by encouraging people to recognize the most common stroke symptoms and to act F.A.S.T.

- **F = FACE** Ask the person to smile. Does one side of the face droop?
- **A = ARM** Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?
- **S = SPEECH** Ask the person to repeat a simple phrase. Does the speech sound slurred or strange?
- **T = TIME** If you observe any of these signs, it's time to call 9-1-1.

The FDA has approved treatment for a clot-busting drug that dissolves the blood clot and restores blood flow to the brain. "For the drug to work effectively, it must be given within three hours of the first sign of stroke symptoms. It's important to be aware of stroke risks and have a strong knowledge of stroke symptoms to get the treatment needed by acting F.A.S.T..

For every minute that brain cells are deprived of oxygen during stroke, the likelihood of brain damage increases. Treatment is most effective if given early.

There are many steps you can take to help prevent a stroke. The Otsego County Health Department reminds everyone that you can prevent a stroke by keeping your blood pressure and cholesterol levels under control, maintaining a healthy weight, eating a balanced diet, and quitting smoking. If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation. ALL of these are helpful when dealing with stroke prevention.

For more information about stroke awareness, call the Otsego County Health Department at 607-547-4230, or visit the New York State Department of Health web site at www.nyhealth.gov.

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