

BLOOD PRESSURE EDUCATION TOOLKIT
MODULE 1
CASE STUDY #2

During Mrs. Bell's (age 72 years) last appointment with her family doctor, she was found to have a blood pressure of 174/92. She had made the appointment with her doctor due to a recent episode of some slurring of speech and confusion. The episode only lasted a minute or two and Mrs. Bell only agreed to see the doctor because her husband insisted she go. Mrs. Bell was sure the episode was just the result of her being overtired due to a visit from her grandchildren.

During the visit, the doctor explained to Mrs. Bell that she may have experienced a transient ischemic attack (TIA) and he immediately started her on some new medications including an antithrombotic and an antihypertensive as well as scheduled her for further tests including blood work (eg. CBC, electrolytes, FBS and lipids), a CT of the head, ECG and carotid dopplers. Mrs. Bell has a return appointment to discuss the test results next week.

Mrs. Bell and her husband did several errands on their way home but forgot to go to the pharmacy to pick up her new medications. They were both tired so decided that they would wait until tomorrow to get the prescription filled. Mrs. Bell knew her blood pressure was high but was sure that a few days of rest and relaxing in her garden would make the difference. Mrs. Bell woke at about 1:30 am with a severe headache. She attempted to get out of bed for some Tylenol but immediately fell to the floor and was unable to get up. Mr. Bell could not understand what his wife was saying. The last time Mr. Bell saw his wife well with no headache, speech or mobility problems was around midnight when she got up to go to the bathroom.

QUESTIONS

1. What should Mr. Bell do?

Call 911 immediately. Mrs. Bell may be having a stroke which is a life threatening emergency. The sooner Mrs. Bell gets to the emergency department by ambulance the sooner she will be able to get treatment to reduce the seriousness of her stroke.

Mr Bell will be able to report to the paramedics the time that Mrs. Bell was last seen well. This information will help the health care team to ensure that Mrs. Bell quickly gets the best care to reduce the effects of her stroke and begin recover. Mrs. Bell may qualify for a 'clot-busting' drug called tPA which needs to be given within 4.5 hours after stroke symptom onset to be effective and improve her recovery from a stroke.

2. What are the symptoms of a stroke?
 - a) *Sudden Weakness – sudden loss of strength or sudden numbness in the face, arm, or leg, even if temporary*
 - b) *Sudden Trouble speaking – sudden difficulty speaking or understanding or sudden confusion, even if temporary*
 - c) *Sudden Vision Problems – sudden trouble with vision, even if temporary*
 - d) *Sudden Headache – sudden severe and unusual headache*
 - e) *Sudden Dizziness – sudden loss of balance especially with any of the above signs*

BLOOD PRESSURE EDUCATION TOOLKIT
MODULE 1
CASE STUDY #2

3. What abnormal symptoms did Mrs. Bell have?

- a) Sudden Difficulty Speaking*
- b) Sudden Severe Headache*
- c) Sudden Weakness*

4. What is the difference between a TIA and a stroke?

A TIA will resolve quickly (usually within an hour). A stroke will not.

5. Why was the doctor concerned that Mrs. Bell might have had a TIA?

10% of people who have a TIA if not treated will have a stroke within 90 days and half of these people will have a stroke within 48 hours of the TIA. Thus it is very important that treatment to prevent stroke is started immediately.