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## STROKE SURVIVOR TALKS PREVENTION TO AFRICAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY AND ANYBODY WHO WILL LISTEN

*Greg Traylor hopes his eight-year struggle will provide motivation for others*

LOS ANGELES (Aug. 12, 2009) – Greg Traylor, drove home from dinner with his wife and four children riding in their GMC Suburban 2500. Minutes later, the 46-year-old collapsed on the bathroom floor after suffering a stroke, and was taken by paramedics to the nearest hospital before being transferred to [Cedars-Sinai Medical Center](#).

Nearly eight years later, Traylor, now 53, lives in a rehabilitation center near his home, where he undergoes physical therapy three times a week. He is working toward an associate of arts degree at Santa Monica City College. He also volunteers at Cedars-Sinai to help [new stroke victims](#) adjust to life after stroke, and is eager to help potential stroke victims learn how to avoid the catastrophe that turned his life upside down.

“I can’t walk and I can’t use my left side at all,” said the Woodland Hills resident, who uses an electric wheelchair for transportation and voice-recognition transcription software for schoolwork. He was in a coma for three days following his stroke, and doctors at that time were not sure he would survive.

“It took me almost a year to get my speech back, and my memory has just started coming back in the last year and a half. It’s improving more now. I can read 20 pages and remember what I read, but it took practice. It took hard work,” said Traylor, who worked as a sound engineer in the music recording industry prior to his stroke.

Traylor wants to continue working in the area of vocational rehabilitation – which he is now doing as a volunteer – after he receives his degree. He would like to visit colleges and schools to encourage young people to take care of their health as they grow older. As an African-American who had a stroke at a relatively young age, he hopes his experience will motivate others in high-risk populations to learn about prevention and early intervention, although his message is not limited to any particular group.

“I’ve got a special interest in talking to anybody who will listen,” he said. “I have no color hang-ups, none at all.”

The American Heart Association says African-Americans, Mexican-Americans, American Indians, native Hawaiians, and some Asian-Americans are at higher risk than Caucasians for heart disease and stroke. According to the National Stroke Association, African-Americans are affected by stroke more often than any other group. They are twice as likely as Caucasians to die from stroke, and one half of all African-American women will die from stroke or heart disease.

“Stroke prevention measures are the same for everyone, regardless of ethnic background, but not all risks are preventable, and lack of access to prevention, screening and treatment programs may play a role in

stroke statistics in minority populations," said David Palestrant, M.D., director of the [Stroke Program and Neuro-Critical Care at Cedars-Sinai](#).

"Some groups have genetic predispositions for stroke. Sickle cell anemia, for example, a hereditary disorder that affects certain African-Americans, increases stroke risk even among children. Although this risk can be reduced through early detection and intervention, not all children have access to screening," Palestrant said. "African-Americans have higher incidences of smoking, obesity and high blood pressure – all major risk factors for stroke. These often may be controlled through lifestyle changes and medication if people have access to counseling, care and treatment."

Traylor said there are two common misconceptions about blood pressure that he often tries to correct. One is that blood pressure medication has a negative effect on sexual function. "That's not true," he said. "But there are a lot of men who have a fear of that, so they won't take it."

The other misconception is that blood pressure medication can be taken on an "as needed" basis, based on how the patient feels. "Your medication is really a serious thing if you have high blood pressure or any kind of heart disease," he said. "Some people don't take their medication because they feel like they're in good shape, but that doesn't matter. It doesn't work like that. You could be feeling good and your blood pressure could still be high. Definitely check it, and take that medication."

Traylor also urges people to take any stroke symptoms seriously, call 911 and go to a hospital that has a dedicated stroke program because immediate intervention may now be able to stop or even reverse the effects of a stroke.

"I went into a coma for three days, and they told my family it didn't look good for me coming out of it. Once I did come out, they said I would never talk again. I'm talking, and I want to get this word out to people who really need to know," he said. "It's not just for you. It's for your kids and your family that it's going to affect – that you're not going to be able to take care of because you won't be able to do the things you used to do. It's not fair, you not taking care of yourself. Just like you have to take care of your kids, you have to take care of yourself."

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Based on its commitment to following national standards and guidelines that can significantly improve outcomes for stroke patients, the Stroke Program at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center is certified as a Primary Stroke Center by The Joint Commission. In 2009, it received its second consecutive Gold Performance Achievement Award for sustained performance based on the American Stroke Association's "Get With The Guidelines" program.

The Stroke Program offers a special support group for younger survivors of stroke. "One Stroke Ahead: Young Person's Stroke Support Group" meets on the third Thursday of each month from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Designed for stroke survivors ranging in age from 18 to 55, it addresses issues faced by those who may be hoping to go back to school or work and resume their family roles and responsibilities.

Cedars-Sinai's original stroke support group, "Yes I Can," meets on the second Thursday of each month from 2 to 4 p.m.