

Dear Colleague,

Stroke in progress – risk factors, recognition and first aid.

A joint letter from the Chiropractic Expert Group
and representatives of the UK chiropractic profession.

You may recall in January 2025, following the inquest into the death of 29-year-old Joanna Kowalczyk, the coroner issued a Regulation 28 (Prevention of Future Deaths) report to the General Chiropractic Council.

In response, the GCC convened a Chiropractic Expert Group, bringing together individuals from across the profession (and beyond), to consider the wider lessons for the profession in mitigating against such an incident in the future. You can read about that work [on the GCC website](#).

As part of the profession's continuing commitment to evidence-based practice and patient safety, we are asking all chiropractors to reflect on their current knowledge and understanding of stroke recognition and risk factors.

The Expert Group identified areas where it was felt understanding of stroke across the profession could be strengthened. Specifically:

- Some types of stroke (notably cervical artery dissections) can **mimic musculoskeletal conditions**, such as neck pain or headache, and it follows that patients experiencing these symptoms may seek chiropractic care.
- The **symptoms of a stroke in progress can fluctuate or appear to improve**, which can make timely recognition more difficult.
- While many risk factors for stroke are well understood, there remains **a lack of research regarding the risk of stroke in individuals with connective tissue disorders**, so we highlight the need for continued vigilance and ongoing appraisal of emerging research in this area.

We also ask you to consider your own knowledge in recognising a stroke and the correct immediate care (first aid and calling 999) of a suspected stroke in progress.

The following reputable sources of guidance provide comprehensive, up-to-date information on stroke and transient ischaemic attack (TIA):

- **NICE Clinical Guideline 128: Stroke and transient ischaemic attack in over 16s: diagnosis and initial management**
<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng128>
- **The Stroke Association website for professionals:**
<https://www.stroke.org.uk/professionals>

These resources offer valuable insights into the clinical presentation, management, and prevention of stroke, and are relevant to all healthcare professionals (including chiropractors) who may encounter patients at risk.

We encourage you to review the above resources, as well as carrying out your own research, and reflect on how this information may apply to your clinical assessment and decision-making. Recognising the early signs of stroke, and understanding its varied presentations, can play a vital role in ensuring that patients receive timely referral and care.

Thank you for your continued commitment to professional development and patient safety.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nick Jones". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Nick Jones (GCC CEO and Registrar)
on behalf of The Chiropractic Expert Group

Signatories (alphabetical by organisation)

Tim Button – President, British Chiropractic Association

Bernadette Martin – President, McTimoney Chiropractic Association

Stuart Smellie – President, Royal College of Chiropractors

Ross McDonald – President, Scottish Chiropractic Association

Marc Muncila – President, United Chiropractic Association