

To the editor:

On Saturday evening, September 16, 2006, at age 50, I suffered a stroke.

Despite some alarming symptoms, including slurred speech and some paralysis on one side, I refused to listen to my wife Mary's suggestion that I see a doctor. I was insisting that I just needed to lie down when our son, Ryan Jr. arrived home, and immediately recognized that I was having a stroke and needed immediate medical attention.

After my arrival at Prince County Hospital in Summerside and a speedy assessment by the medical team, it was determined that I was a candidate for t-PA, the clot busting drug. It was administered, and to everyone's relief, reversed the effects of the stroke. Back to my old self, I walked out of the hospital three days later.

I hold no illusions about what happened to me that evening a year and a half ago - I had a narrow escape. It is frightening to think of the impact on my health and my ability to live independently, if t-PA had not been available. And the reality is that until August, 2006, and the implementation of the PEI Integrated Stroke Strategy, it was not available anywhere on PEI..

Thanks to the vision of the Heart and Stroke Foundation and the Department of Health, I was among the first of many whose lives have been saved and quality of life preserved by the availability of t-PA. As well, the Foundation's stroke awareness campaign last fall, another strategy recommendation, means that more Islanders now recognize the signs of stroke, and understand the importance of getting help quickly.

I do not take my happy ending for granted, but I do recognize that while t-PA treatment for stroke and awareness of stroke warning signs are critically important, we cannot stop there. While not a medical expert, I know that one important way of ensuring improved outcomes for stroke patients would be a stroke unit on PEI. Stroke units save lives and reduce the chances of permanent disability.

I will be eternally grateful to those who recognized the need for a stroke strategy for PEI, a strategy that allowed me to walk away from the hospital with no physical or mental impairment. Let's allow others to walk away from their strokes by moving now to implement a stroke unit for PEI.

Ryan Noye
Summerside