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Global burden of stroke: an underestimate

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The global burden of stroke outlined by Valery Feigin and colleagues' Article (Jan 18, p 245)¹ is likely to be a substantial underestimation in view of the consequences of stroke disease on conditions other than acute stroke, which substantially affect health and wellbeing.² Overt and occult cerebrovascular disease, both large and small vessel, have been recognised to contribute to Alzheimer's disease and vascular dementia.³

Less generally acknowledged is the role of cerebrovascular disease in a range of other conditions including gait disorders,⁴ depression,⁵ and oropharyngeal dysphagia,² particularly in older people. Inclusion of these endpoints in strategies for stroke prevention not only adds to the urgency and impetus for their implementation, but will also provide a multiplier for the health benefits of such programmes.

I declare that I have no competing interests.

- 1 Feigin VL, Forouzanfar MH, Krishnamurthi R, et al. Global and regional burden of stroke during 1990–2010: findings from the Global Burden of Disease Study 2010. *Lancet* 2014; **383**: 245–55.
- 2 Strandberg TE, Pitkälä KH, Tilvis RS, O'Neill D, Erkinjuntti T. Geriatric syndromes—vascular disorders? *Ann Med* 2013; **45**: 265–73.
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- 4 Martin MP, O'Neill D. Vascular higher-level gait disorders—a step in the right direction? *Lancet* 2004; **363**: 8.
- 5 Dalby RB, Chakravarty MM, Ahdidan J, et al. Localization of white-matter lesions and effect of vascular risk factors in late-onset major depression. *Psychol Med* 2010; **40**: 1389–99.