Stroke

REFRESHER

RECOGNIZE IT

- Ischemic (87%): blockage stops blood and oxygen flow to the brain
- Embolism: clot or plaque from elsewhere lodges in a brain artery
- Thrombosis: clot formed in an artery in the brain
- Hemorrhagic (13%): vessel breaks — intracerebral or subarachnoid
- TIA: temporary blockage, usually no permanent damage; 7% stroke within 90 days

ASSESS

- When was the patient last seen normal?
- What is normal for the patient?
- Who last saw the patient normal? Get name and phone number
- Left-sided symptoms: right weakness/numbness, right gaze preference, left neglect, slurred speech
- Right-sided symptoms: left weakness/numbness, left gaze preference, speech and comprehension problems
- Brainstem: nausea/vomiting, vertigo, speech and swallowing problems, abnormal eye movements
- Hemorrhage clues: 'worst headache of life,' light intolerance, neck stiffness or pain
- Rule out mimics: hypoglycemia, overdose/toxicity, seizures (Todd's paralysis), migraine, Bell's palsy

ACT — FIRST MOVES

1. Establish last-seen-normal time and witness contact early
2. Give hospital notification (TCD notification on the original)
3. Transport for definitive stroke care

PEARLS

- Mimics also include alcohol intoxication, cerebral infections, epidural hematoma
- Mimics also include metabolic disorders, brain tumors, hypertensive encephalopathy
- Brainstem strokes produce findings on both sides of the body

Take Home Message:

Know the type, find the last-seen-normal time and witness, rule out mimics, and notify the hospital early.