

# ‘Thousands miss out on life-saving stroke care’

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Only 1,000 patients have received a new treatment called a thrombectomy  
ALAMY

Thousands of people are missing out on life-saving stroke care because of a shortage of specialists, doctors say.

The British Association of Stroke Physicians (BASP) said that the lack of staff was “limiting the ability of the NHS to deliver the latest medical advances and best treatment”.

It estimates that 10,000 patients a year could benefit from a new treatment called a thrombectomy, but only 1,000 receive it. It involves using a wire to pluck potentially lethal blood clots from deep within the brain and has been described as the biggest change in stroke treatment in medical history.

The “significant and growing shortage of stroke consultants” is also preventing patients from being treated with clot-busting drugs, the association says.

It calculates that 226 new specialists — a third more than at present — are needed to meet demand.

More than 100,000 Britons a year have a stroke, when the blood supply to part of the brain is cut off. Deprived of oxygen and nutrients, cells begin to die.

It is Britain's fourth biggest killer, the main cause of disability and costs society £26 billion a year. Rapid treatment, however, can save lives, cut the odds of disability and save millions of pounds in health and social care costs.

Tom Robinson, president of the BASP, said: "Great advances have been made in the treatment available to patients, but to offer these treatments to as many patients as possible we need more doctors to be trained in stroke medicine, and to encourage increased take-up of this vital specialism among medical students."

Dominic Brand, of the Stroke Association, said: "Every person who has had a stroke should be cared for by people with the right skills, knowledge and expertise to help them recover and rebuild their lives. We need a stroke workforce of sufficient numbers and skills to ensure that every stroke patient and survivor has the best possible treatment, care and support."

NHS England said "more people are already surviving and thriving", adding: "Our interim people plan sets out what we can do now to modernise our stroke workforce ahead of long-term funding decisions for training being made by government later in the year."