Three NUH studies aim to better prevent, treat stroke

Efforts critical for S’pore, which has one of the world’s highest rates of the disease

Felicia Choo

One-fifth of stroke patients with a condition that predisposes them to suffering another one may one day be able to prevent an attack before it even happens.

Researchers from the National University Hospital (NUH) will carry out a test next year in which patients will be fitted with a wearable device that can detect the difference in heart contraction between patients with atrial fibrillation and those without.

Atrial fibrillation is a heart condition that leads to an irregular and rapid heart rate, as well as poor contraction of the heart muscles, resulting in blood clots forming in the heart chambers.

According to the Singapore Stroke Registry Annual Report 2016, there were over 7,000 stroke cases in Singapore that year.

Half of all stroke patients develop major bleeding within the brain for between 3 per cent and 6 per cent of patients, with the risk of bleeding increasing with age and size of stroke.

“Even patients who are younger, have a lower blood pressure, and have been on treatments for their atrial fibrillation for a longer time still have a risk of stroke,” Dr Raymond Seet, a senior consultant in NUH’s division of neurology, said.

But doctors often face the challenge of selecting patients who will benefit the most from these treatments, because such patients – those older than 70 with severe stroke – are also the ones at greatest risk of developing major bleeding within the brain, said Dr Seet.

In fact, the treatments cause major bleeding within the brain for between 3 per cent and 6 per cent of patients, with the risk of bleeding increasing with age and size of stroke.

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