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### Profile of the American Heart Association: Building Healthier Lives

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**The American heart association mission is building healthier lives, free of cardiovascular diseases and stroke. To accomplish this, its volunteers and organisation are involved in an extremely broad range of activities.**

The activities of the Association systematically attack the problem of cardiovascular disease across the knowledge spectrum in the following ways:

- Discovering knowledge through research;
- Adapting knowledge for different audiences by offering information in different formats, levels of difficulty and languages, and
- Disseminating knowledge through a variety of materials, media, activities and services.

To focus its efforts, the association set a strategic goal in 1999 to reduce coronary heart disease, stroke and risk by 25 percent by the year 2010. Working to achieve this goal has enabled the association to prioritise resources and activities.

To achieve this goal, it funds research, conducts professional and public education programmes, offers community services and is engaged in advocacy efforts with local, state and national elected officials.

#### About the American Heart Association

The American Heart Association is divided physically into the National Centre (located in Dallas, Texas) and eight affiliate offices that cover the United States and Puerto Rico. Operations are divided into seven main areas that are listed below.

Millions of volunteers and donors support their efforts every year. The American Heart Association and its division, the American Stroke Association, are working hard to protect the population from heart and stroke, the number 1 and 3 killers.

Since 1924 the association a national voluntary health organisation has shared information and invested resources to create lifesaving advances and make communities safer from heart disease and stroke.

#### Research a Priority

Funding medical research at national and state levels is a key association priority. Supporting the work of outstanding researchers helps discover knowledge that benefits all Americans. Ten Nobel Prizes have been awarded to researchers for work funded by the association.

To help achieve the goal of reducing coronary heart disease, stroke and risk by 25 percent by 2010, the association targets various key groups. A wealth of programmes, products and services are offered to help people learn how to reduce their risk:

- Call-to-action campaigns highlight real people touched by heart disease and stroke to raise awareness and inspire Americans to reduce their risk.
- Online and telephone outreach services provide hope and information 24/7 to people throughout the nation.
- Community education programmes spread lifesaving information while encouraging healthier lifestyles.
- Labels on certified foods help consumers shop smarter and eat healthier to lower their risk of cardiovascular disease.
- Cookbooks help people cook healthier to live longer.

#### Targeted Programmes for High-Risk Groups

Heart disease and stroke threaten all Americans, but members of certain racial/ethnic groups are at particularly high risk. The association offers programmes specifically targeted to meet the needs of people in these groups.

Patients are another key group. Association education programmes, products and services help patients learn and make healthy changes to prevent or manage disease. Caregivers and healthcare professionals rely on association materials for their loved ones and patients.

Through its American Stroke Association division, the association supports stroke programmes to reduce disability and death and promote rehabilitation and recovery. Local programmes help local communities offer the best possible care for stroke patients, their families and their caregivers.

#### What is the American Stroke Association?

The American Stroke Association is a division of the American Heart Association that focuses on reducing risk, disability and death from stroke through research, education, fund raising and advocacy. The American Heart Association created the American Stroke Association after many years of increasing emphasis on stroke. It spends more money on stroke research and programmes than any other organisation except the federal government.

#### Stroke a Strategic Priority

The American Heart Association views stroke as a strategic priority because of its significant impact on the American public. Stroke is the third leading cause of death in the United States and a major cause of serious, long-term disability.

On average, someone suffers a stroke every 45 seconds. Someone dies of a stroke every three minutes. The American Stroke Association offers a wide array of programmes, products and services, from patient education materials to scientific statements.

#### **Professional Education Initiatives and AHA**

Professional education initiatives allow doctors and other healthcare professionals to take research from bench to bedside and improve care for patients throughout America. The association provides the latest in scientific information through conferences, online training tools, satellite broadcasts and ten scientific journals. The association is also working hard to help hospitals in local communities improve protocols to provide better care for patients.

The American Heart Association is the recognised leader in CPR training and has a nationwide network of instructors to train doctors, nurses and paramedics in how to provide life support for cardiovascular emergency victims. The association also works with companies, schools and the public to teach people how to handle cardiac emergencies. Finally, advocacy efforts at the local, state and national levels help legislators understand health issues and pass legislation that safeguards the cardiovascular health of Americans of all ages.

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