

Stroke Health Care Assessment in Nigeria

Zida Anyachebelu and Cassandra Owei
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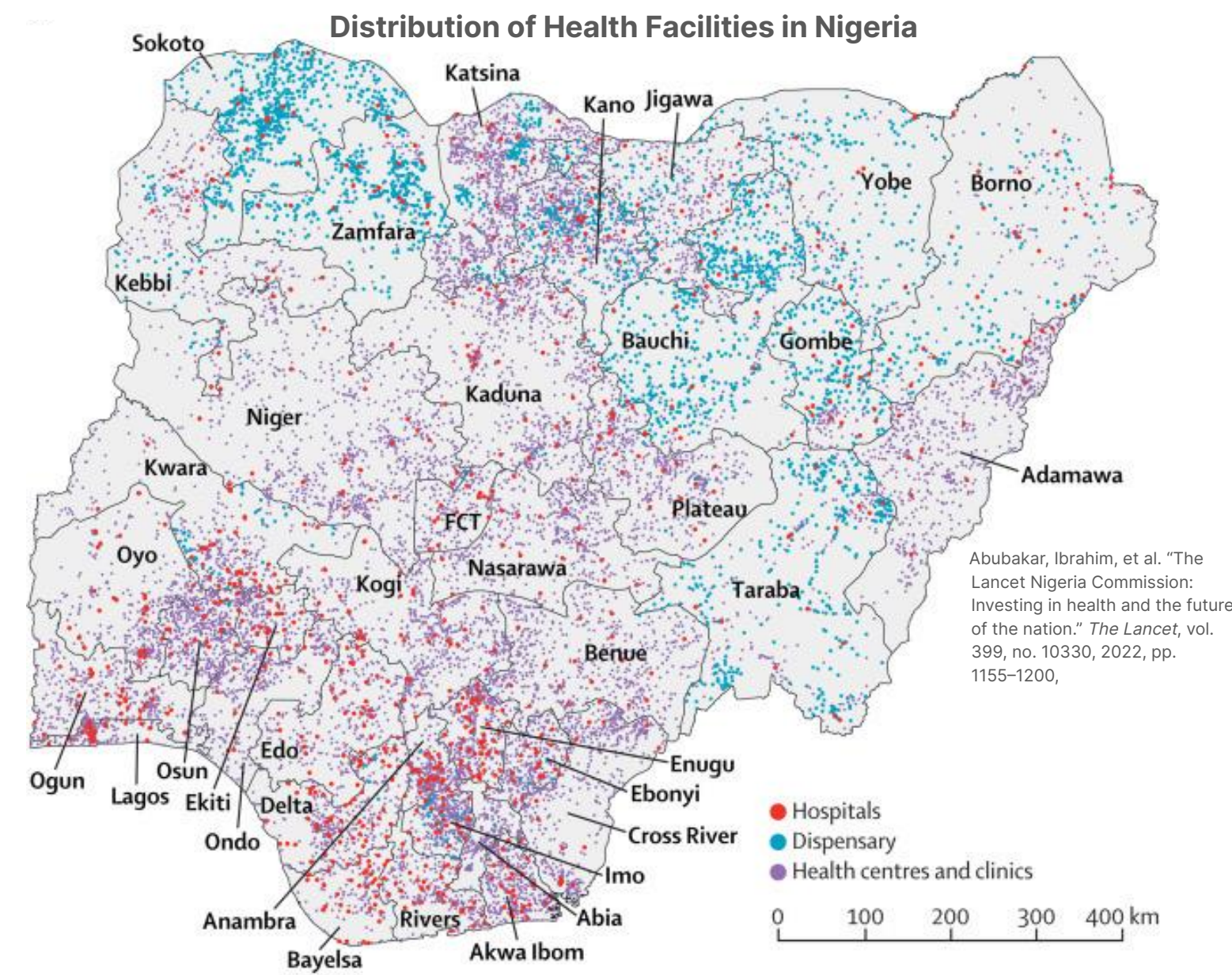
Introduction

In Nigeria, most people know someone who has suffered from a stroke, yet it is unclear whether the general population understands the severity of it.

The goals of this research project were to:

- Understand the baseline levels of awareness of strokes and the national emergency number in Nigeria
- Spread awareness about recognizing the symptoms of a stroke
- Stress the importance of seeking immediate help after experiencing a stroke
- Understand the experience of stroke survivors and post stroke care in Nigeria
- Consider the cultural context of Nigeria to ensure that the awareness materials and recommendations were culturally relevant and resonated with the local population.

In achieving these goals, the research ultimately aims to contribute to a reduction in the incidence and impact of stroke in Nigeria by raising awareness, promoting prevention strategies, and facilitating timely and effective medical care for stroke survivors.



Methodology

In order to assess and promote stroke awareness in Nigeria, the following steps were taken:

- Designed a survey to understand the baseline levels of awareness with regards to strokes and the national emergency number
- Conducted in-depth interviews with stroke survivors and families to gather firsthand accounts of their experiences, challenges, and recovery journeys, helping us gain valuable qualitative insights to the research.
- Designed and created a series of informative posters in Nigeria's most popular languages (Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa), effectively bridging language barriers and spreading awareness about stroke symptoms, prevention, and available resources to a wider audience.
- Wrote a script for an animated short that aims to spread awareness about the importance of seeking immediate care, informed by the interviews
- Performed extensive research on hospitals (public and private) and medical facilities in Nigeria (starting with Bayelsa State) that offer stroke care services, providing essential information to patients seeking proper medical attention and support.

Results

With regards to understanding which hospitals are equipped to treat stroke patients in Bayelsa State:

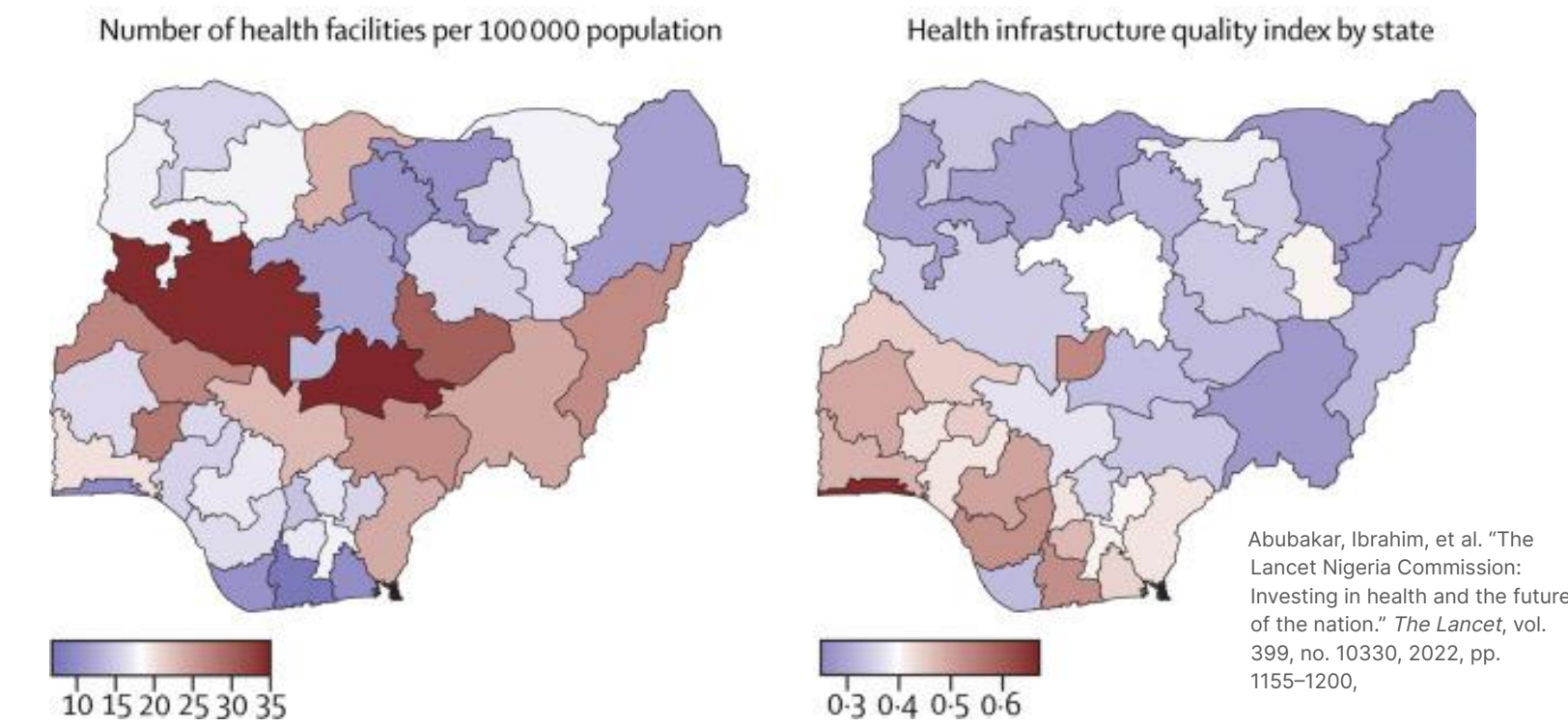
- 42 public Healthcare Facilities were identified, of which less than 1/5 were fully equipped for thrombolytic treatment.
- It is routine for smaller healthcare facilities to simply stabilize stroke patients, before transferring them to more well-equipped facilities in the following hours or days (some transfers require boat travel).
- The national emergency number, 112, is not fully functional in most states, and it is more commonly used in big states such as Lagos and Abuja.

With regards to understanding the experiences of stroke survivors and their families through interviews:

- Survivors expressed a lack of rehabilitation regimens, both physically and mentally.
- Stroke survivors often felt ostracized and stigmatized by their community, with many losing the support of friends and family.
- Due to the high rates of poverty, stroke survivors struggle to live the lifestyle that life after a stroke demands (ie diet, physiotherapy, speech therapy etc)

With regards to the survey, posters, and short film:

- These materials are not yet in full circulation, thus results in these areas cannot be presented at this stage.



Conclusion

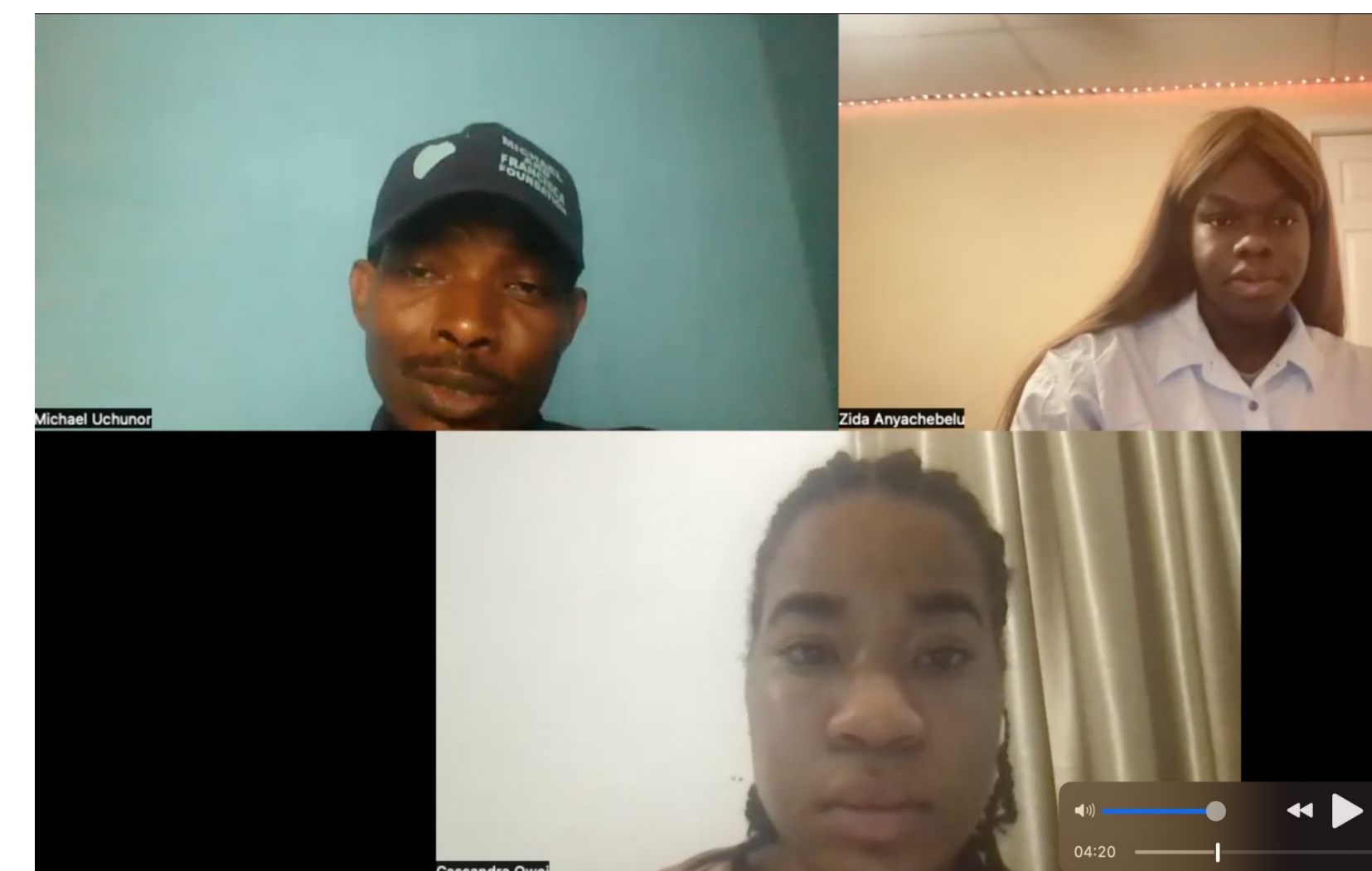
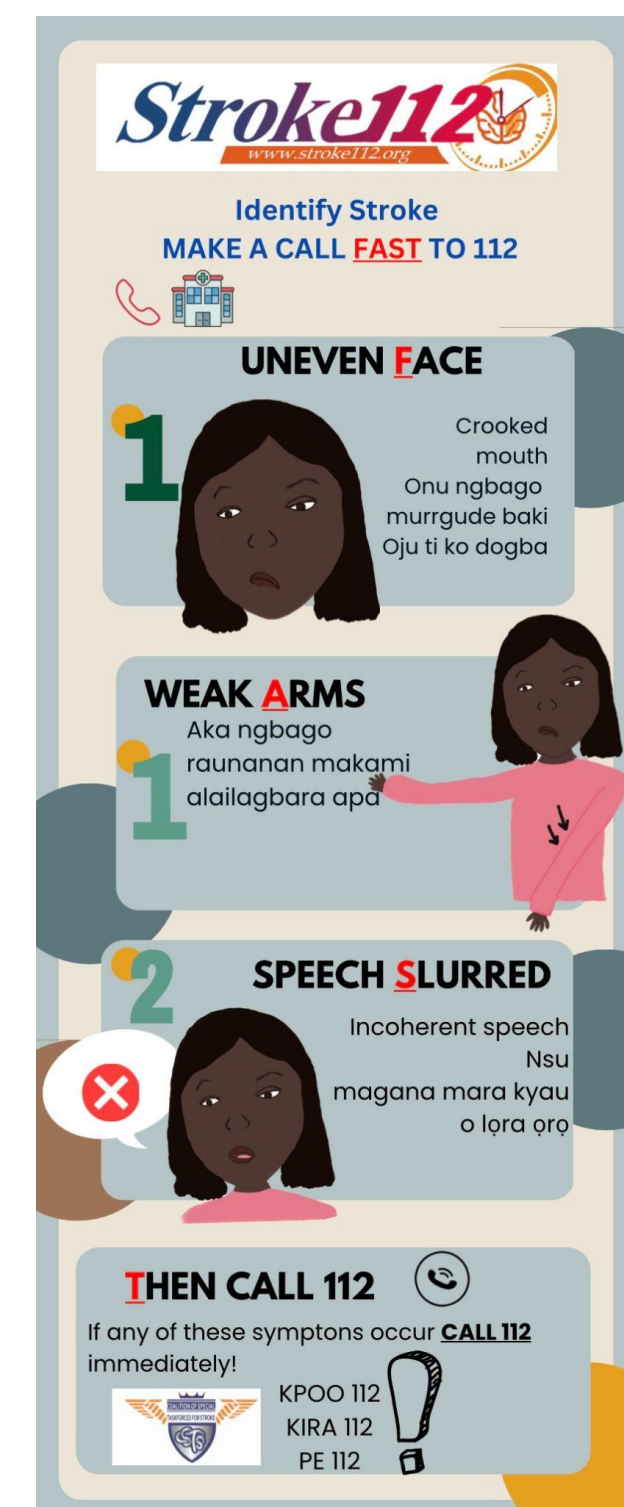
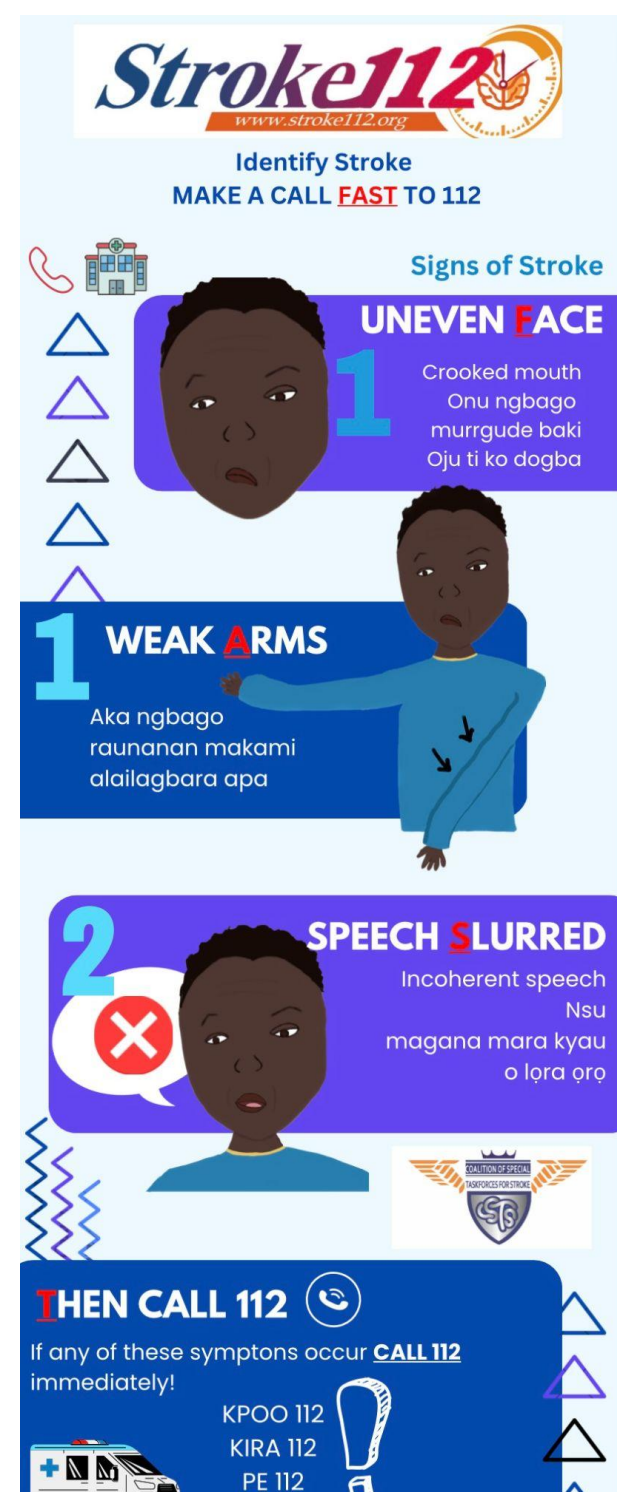
Despite the large percentage of the population that suffer from strokes in Nigeria, resources are not evenly distributed, thus there is a lack of well-equipped healthcare facilities that can treat strokes in most states.

Most people are unaware of the national emergency number, or do not trust its reliability, making it not widely used in smaller states across the country.

Survivors suffer not only the health consequences of a stroke, but also the socio-economic implications of living in a stressed country with little regard for their lifestyle.

This project is still in its early stages, thus there are many limitations as it currently stands. The survey has not been fully distributed. Additionally, due to the timeframe, Bayelsa state was the focus for contacting healthcare facilities, rather than all of Nigeria.

As the research continues, we hope to gain more insight and eventually contribute to a reduction in the incidence and impact of stroke in Nigeria by raising awareness, promoting prevention strategies, and facilitating timely and effective medical care for stroke survivors.



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