



Enhanced Stroke Care Comes to Salem Regional Medical Center

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A stroke or “brain attack” occurs when blood flow to an area of the brain is stopped. When this happens, brain cells begin to die because they don’t get the oxygen they need. Depending on the severity of the attack and the part of the brain affected, body functions such as speech and movement may be lost without immediate treatment.

Salem Regional Medical Center (SRMC) is collaborating with Akron General Medical Center (AGMC) to provide advanced telemedicine services, with the goal of enhancing care for stroke patients when there are no moments to spare. Through the telestroke program at SRMC, physicians from AGMC’s Neuroscience Institute, which is an affiliate of the Cleveland Clinic, can examine patients at SRMC via secure, real-time telecommunications, to help diagnose the patient’s condition and determine the necessary plan of care.

Time is Brain

“Time is critical when it comes to preventing brain damage from a stroke,” said Lauren Fredrickson, M.D., Medical Director of SRMC’s Emergency Department (ED). She stressed that immediate treatment is important in stopping a stroke and preventing loss of function or death.

“Through the telestroke program, stroke care at SRMC can be enhanced by the virtual presence of a neurologist from AGMC’s Neuroscience Institute, allowing patients to receive the highest level of care and remain in our community. These specialists will use telemedicine technology to see and speak to the patient and family, conduct the examination with the ED physician and nurse, and help select the most effective treatment.”

“On average, approximately 50 people in Columbiana County die each year from cerebrovascular disease, which manifests as a stroke. The telestroke program at SRMC has the potential to benefit many of those patients, but only if stroke symptoms are recognized early and the patient is brought to the ED within three to six hours of the start of symptoms.”

Advanced Treatment Locally

“Salem Regional Medical Center is committed to helping lower the devastating impact of strokes, which affect more than a half-million Americans each year,” added Anita

Hackstedde, M.D., SRMC President/CEO. “To that end, SRMC has dramatically enhanced our ability to treat stroke patients locally with the launch of our telestroke program. So, when a person has a stroke, the medical professionals at SRMC are even more prepared to provide our patients with direct and effective treatment at the bedside. Our SRMC physicians will be collaborating with physicians from AGMC’s Neuroscience Institute, who are board-certified neurologists and highly trained in evaluating and treating acute neurological conditions, such as stroke.”

How Telestroke Works

The connection between SRMC and Akron General is a two-way video conferencing system that includes a high-resolution television monitor, camera, and telemetry connections that are positioned beside the patient's bed in the ED. Dr. Fredrickson said the response time to get the stroke specialist in live contact with the patient at SRMC will be ten minutes from the time the call is placed by the ED staff. That call is made after the ED physician has evaluated the patient and a CT scan is obtained. The CT scan results can then be reviewed with the Akron General stroke specialists to assist with the diagnosis and treatment decisions.

Enhancing Care

Dr. Fredrickson said that the telestroke capabilities will assist SRMC medical professionals in making the complex diagnosis of stroke and help determine the best options to treat the damaging effects of a stroke. “Our physicians will have more opportunity to use a drug called tissue plasminogen activator, or ‘tPA,’ which has the potential to dissolve a clot and stop tissue damage caused by a blocked artery,” she added. “Other patients may require immediate transfer to Akron General, a highly specialized neurological center, or to other tertiary hospitals based on the patient’s situation, for more aggressive therapy to remove the clot or for surgery to repair a broken vessel in the brain.”

“The key is getting patients to the Emergency Department as soon as possible,” Dr. Fredrickson concluded. “The greatest opportunity to survive a stroke and limit disability is to seek emergency treatment at the first sign of any stroke symptoms. Ideally, if a person is able to get to the hospital within one hour of symptoms occurring, he or she will have the best option for treatment. Time lost translates into brain tissue lost.”

Recognize the Signs of Stroke

The warning signs of stroke include the sudden beginning of:

- Numbness or weakness in the face, arm, or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Trouble seeing out of one or both eyes
- Trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden or severe headache with no known cause

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