

County of Santa Clara

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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EMERGENCY MEDICAL CENTER AGENCY RECOMMENDS REDIRECTING AMBULANCES TO PRIMARY STROKE CENTER HOSPITALS

SAN JOSE, Calif. – The Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors adopted the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Agency recommendation to provide a far-reaching approach to improving the identification, transport and treatment of stroke victims. Key features of the recommendation were to endorse Primary Stroke Centers as hospitals of choice and to add a transport policy that would redirect ambulances to Primary Stroke Care hospitals in Santa Clara County. This change in policy will help get stroke victims the best care possible in a short period of time.

“The best outcomes for stroke patients happens when they get the treatment they need and they get it quickly,” stated Supervisor Liz Kniss, Chair, Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors. “The stroke care recommendations with enhanced education will help to combat the impact of stroke and save lives.”

Stroke is the 3rd leading cause of death in the United States and a significant cause of disability. Over the past few years a growing body of medical evidence has shown that quick identification and treatment can significantly reduce the mortality and morbidity of stroke. The Joint Commission on Accreditation for Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) provides national certification for hospitals that adhere to specific guidelines for stroke care. In Santa Clara County, there are currently four hospitals that meet these standards:

- Good Samaritan Hospital (one of the first in the country to be certified);
- Kaiser Permanente Santa Clara;
- Kaiser Permanente Santa Teresa;
- Stanford University Medical Center.

Other hospitals in Santa Clara County have indicated they are in the process of obtaining JCAHO certification.

“Santa Clara County is fortunate to have four certified Primary Stroke Centers,” commented Bruce Lee, Director, EMS Agency. “We are also fortunate to have people in our community who have been passionate about this issue and have worked in partnership to make this a reality.”

In 2004, the EMS Agency, in partnership with local hospitals, physicians, paramedic providers and advocacy groups, convened a Blue Ribbon Stroke Task Force. Today’s recommendations to the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors are a result of the work by the Task Force.

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In addition to the previously mentioned recommendations, the EMS Agency recommended changing existing stroke identification and treatment policies, implementing a Quality Assurance Process that evaluates pre-hospital and hospital outcomes, and providing additional Paramedic training and education.

The EMS Agency will now finalize the transport policy, enter into contracts with Primary Stroke Center hospitals, complete paramedic training and education, and develop the Stroke Registry database for pre-hospital and hospital data. Redirecting ambulances to Primary Stroke Centers should begin this fall.