



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Stroke system saves lives and prevents disabilities in Alabama

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Southeast Alabama is a region with a high incidence of stroke, and during the first six months since a pilot stroke emergency care system has been activated, more patients have received rapid stroke treatment thanks to a voluntary system supported by the Alabama Department of Public Health.

Stroke is the leading cause of serious long-term disability and the fourth leading cause of death in the United States. It is vital that patients who are having a stroke be quickly evaluated at a hospital, just like patients who are having a heart attack, to help ensure better patient outcomes regardless of their proximity to an urban stroke center.

The Southeast Regional Pilot Acute Stroke System (SRPASS) serves patients in 18 southeast Alabama counties. It relies heavily on the resources and participation of hospitals, emergency medical service personnel, and coordination by the Alabama Trauma Communications Center.

From the time of the first call, a patient's information is entered into the system and the receiving hospital is provided initial patient information from the field. The network uses an organized plan to route patients with signs of stroke to the closest hospital ready and available to care for them. The around-the-clock system is constantly monitored to correct, improve and validate the quality of care provided.

The most common type of stroke, ischemic stroke, can sometimes be treated and completely reversed by use of a cutting edge "clotbuster" drug called tPA (thrombolytic agent tissue plasminogen activator). Because treatment with tPA is urgent, patients with signs of stroke must be transported quickly to a hospital capable of performing a rapid exam to determine the type of stroke they are experiencing and then treated with tPA when appropriate.

"We have received overwhelming support from prehospital and hospital providers in a team effort," Dr. Sarah Nafziger, Assistant State EMS Medical Director, said. "Emergency physicians and neurologists are pleased with the SRPASS system and most importantly the patients are having fantastic outcomes."

In the first six months, there were 1,260 patients entered in SRPASS and nearly 656 of those patients were ultimately admitted to those hospitals. Fifteen hospitals have already joined and

three additional hospitals are expected to join the system soon, including L.V. Stabler Hospital in Greenville, Crenshaw County Hospital in Luverne, and Bullock County Hospital in Union Springs.

“There is nothing more tragic than seeing stroke patients who would have been eligible to receive tPA, but didn’t receive treatment simply because they did not get to a hospital with the resources to treat them in time,” Dr. Nafziger said. “This pilot system allows each stroke victim an opportunity for the best possible outcome.”

As a result of its trauma and stroke system development, Alabama has become a model for other states in the region and nation.

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