



NEWS

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Stroke nurse at Saint Luke's published in national medical journal

Advance practice nurse outlines role of nursing in Stroke

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – A registered nurse from Saint Luke's renowned Stroke Center is lead author on the American Heart Association scientific statement outlining the clinical guidelines for the nursing care of patients with acute ischemic (blood clot) strokes. These guidelines serve as the principal source of evidence for nurses throughout the United States.

Debbie Summers, R.N., Advance Practice Nurse with the Stroke Center at Saint Luke's Brain and Stroke Institute, authored "Comprehensive Overview of Nursing and Interdisciplinary Care of the Acute Ischemic Stroke Patient. A Scientific Statement from the American Heart Association," published online in *Stroke Journal of the American Heart Association* on May 28, 2009. The article will appear in *Stroke's* print edition in August.

Stroke is the third leading cause of death and the leading cause of serious disability in the U.S. "Time equals brain" when it comes to the need for early and rapid intervention of ischemic strokes, the most common kind.

According to Judy James, State Health Alliance director, American Heart Association/American Stroke Association Midwest Affiliate, the overview is the most up-to-date comprehensive resource for evidence-based care in acute ischemic stroke. "The guidelines equip the clinical team with mechanisms for coordinated care and clearly articulate the roles and responsibilities of the interdisciplinary clinical team during the emergency and acute phases of stroke.

"It's a testament to the leadership role Debbie has assumed on a national scale and an example for all nurses interested in the growing field of stroke nursing," James said.

Advances in stroke care have widened the window of opportunity for acute treatment with clot-busting drugs and interventional embolectomy (clot retriever) devices that can reverse or minimize stroke's often debilitating or lethal impacts. Nursing plays a vital role in the continuum, from prevention, emergency management, hospital care, rehabilitation, research, and community education on stroke.

The comprehensive stroke center at Saint Luke's treats patients who present to the Emergency Department with the same level of urgency as a patient suspected of having a heart attack. "Nurses play a pivotal role in all phases of care of the stroke patient," Summers said. "That coordinated, evidence-based care for 'brain attack' is designed to facilitate optimal outcomes, decrease lengths of stay, costs, and event recurrence."

Saint Luke's Stroke Center provides stroke intervention therapy to nearly 30 percent of patients who present with acute ischemic stroke – the national average is around 3 percent. Annually, more than 800 patients from 60 hospitals in the region are referred to Saint Luke's Brain and Stroke institute for treatment of stroke, transient ischemic attack, arterial venous malformations, and aneurysm.

As an advance practice nurse with the Stroke Center's "Code Neuro" team, Summers is among a group of stroke response nurses on call at Saint Luke's Hospital 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The nurse coordinates care, engages the stroke team, and focuses on moving the potential stroke patient at the proper pace to ensure precious minutes are not wasted.

Summers is a founding member of the Bi-State Stroke Education Consortium to enhance educational opportunities for stroke care providers of all levels.

In addition, she was part of an initiative led by neurologist Marilyn Rymer, M.D., to establish Saint Luke's Stroke Center in 1993. Since then, the center has developed a national reputation for excellence. Teams from across the country and around the world visit Saint Luke's Stroke Center to learn about its efficient, evidence-based model of care.

The journal article can be found online at <http://stroke.ahajournals.org>.

Saint Luke's Health System consists of 11 area hospitals and many primary care practices, and provides a range of inpatient, outpatient, and home care services. Founded as a faith-based, not-for-profit organization, our mission includes a commitment to the highest levels of excellence in health care and the advancement of medical research and education. The health system is an aligned organization in which the physicians and hospitals assume responsibility for enhancing the physical, mental, and spiritual health of people in the metropolitan Kansas City area and the surrounding region.

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