



MEDIA RELEASE

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NHS stroke program excelling in quality indicators

Niagara's stroke program is excelling in a number of key provincial performance indicators for stroke care, according to a recent stroke report card.

The stroke report card for the Local Health Integration Networks in Ontario shows the Niagara District Stroke Centre, based at the NHS's Greater Niagara General Site, is in the top five per cent of the province for five indicators. These five indicators highlight how NHS is performing at the GNG Site related to stroke prevention, emergency care and acute care.

Some of the indicators include:

- proportion of stroke patients who received a brain CT or MRI within 24 hours of arrival at the GNG Emergency Department;
- proportion of stroke patients who arrived at the GNG ED less than 3.5 hours from the onset of symptoms and received the clot-busting drug tPA;
- proportion of GNG stroke patients with a documented initial dysphasia screen (swallowing screen.)

In addition, for the second year in a row, our regional stroke program has the best "door-to-needle time" (the time patients wait to receive life-saving t-PA) in the province at an average of 31 minutes.

"We have made significant progress towards helping drive improvements in stroke prevention and care," says program coordinator Leanne Hammond. "Our team across all our sites is working hard to ensure Niagara patients receive the best possible stroke care. We are very proud of our achievements and pleased that our patients are getting the right care at the right time with improved outcomes."

Stroke symptoms usually appear suddenly and include loss of strength or numbness in the face, arm or leg, difficulty speaking, vision problems, severe and unusual headache and loss of balance.

"I cannot stress enough how important it is to call 9-1-1 as soon as signs and symptoms appear. Paramedics will provide an immediate assessment and begin caring for you. They will transport you by ambulance to our regional stroke centre at the GNG Site," says Dr. Donald Chew, Neurologist and Medical Director of the stroke centre. "There is a limited amount of time from the onset of symptoms to when our stroke specialists can inject t-PA. This is why people should not wait if they experience symptoms, call 9-1-1 immediately."

Derek McNally, NHS Executive Vice President, Clinical Services and Chief Nursing Executive, applauded the stroke program's leadership, front-line staff and Niagara EMS for the achievements. "The results in the report card highlight the impressive work of our team in providing quality healthcare. Also integral in the success of the program has been our strong partnership with Niagara EMS."

Chief Kevin Smith, Niagara EMS, added: "The effectiveness of this program is only made possible through the early recognition and activation of 9-1-1. Our team of emergency medical dispatchers and paramedics are highly trained to recognize the signs and symptoms that enroll patients into the program thereby improving direct access to definitive care and positive patient outcomes as evidenced by this report card."

ABOUT STROKE CARE IN NIAGARA

The NHS's Niagara District Stroke Centre is the regional centre for stroke care. It is located at the Greater Niagara General Site, where a specially trained Emergency Department stroke team treats patients from across the region. This includes assessment for and administration of t-PA, a clot-busting drug that may stop an ischemic stroke.

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