



Fire Rescue Departments from Miami-Dade join forces with area hospitals to announce one of the largest “Stroke Consortiums” in the nation

On July 26, 2012, the Fire Officers Association of Miami-Dade (FOAM-D) held a press conference to announce the collaborative success of an unprecedented FOAM-D Stroke Consortium at Florida International University’s Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine.

Aiming to deliver the highest quality acute stroke care available and improve recovery outcomes, Coral Gables, Hialeah, Homestead, Key Biscayne, Miami, Miami Beach and Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Departments have joined forces with area hospitals to deploy one of the largest networks for the treatment and transport of stroke victims in the country.

According to the Center for Disease Control someone suffers a stroke every 45 seconds of the day. This translates into more than 780,000 strokes annually in the United States alone, with someone dying every 3.3 minutes; costing more than 53.9 billion dollars each year for the treatment of stroke victims. It is the fourth leading cause of death and the primary cause of adult disability in the United States.

The vision to create a stroke network began in 1999, when only about half of the hospitals in South Florida were performing CT scans on a 24-7 basis. The scans are necessary to administer the clot-dissolving drug TPA (tissue plasminogen activator). To expedite treatment, South Florida’s firefighters, doctors and local hospitals have collaborated to create one of the largest stroke consortiums in the nation called FOAM-D Stroke Consortium.

“Under the Stroke Network, hospitals are designated as either a Primary or Comprehensive stroke center. Primary facilities are able to provide care to stroke victims who are within the 3.5-hour window that allows for the use of the clot-busting drug TPA (tissue plasminogen activator). The most serious cases and those past the critical 3.5-hour window will be transported to a comprehensive facility staffed by an interventional neuroradiologist,” said Dr. Jeffrey Horstmyer, FOAM-D Neurologist and Chairman of the Department of Neurology of FIU’s Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine who created a two-page checklist with Dr. Alejandro Forteza and Captain John Curry from Coral Gables Fire Department named “The Stroke Alert” to help emergency crews determine if a patient is having a stroke, how serious the stroke is, and which hospital can offer the best treatment.

“We are the ones responsible for making sure we make the appropriate assessment on the scene and get the patient transported to the hospital, and most importantly for a stroke, take patients to the appropriate hospital,” said Chief Javier Otero of the Miami Beach Fire Department. “What this expedition of care does is reduce and hopefully eventually eliminate deaths, but mostly the loss in quality of life after a stroke.”

Dr. Forteza said Phase 2 will include educating the public about the symptoms of a stroke. “One program will be teaching school children about the symptoms of strokes and having them teach their parents as homework,” Forteza said.

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