



Altoona Regional Health System

A nonprofit community health care system

NEWS RELEASE — FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ALTOONA REGIONAL RECEIVES AWARD FOR COMMITMENT TO QUALITY CARE FOR STROKE PATIENTS

Altoona Regional Health System has received the 2010 American Heart Association/American Stroke Association's Get With The Guidelines® Stroke Gold Plus Performance Achievement Award. The award recognizes Altoona Regional's commitment and success in implementing excellent care for stroke patients, according to evidence-based guidelines.

To receive the award, Altoona Regional achieved 85 percent or higher adherence to all Get With The Guidelines-Stroke Performance Achievement indicators for two or more consecutive 12-month intervals and achieved 75 percent or higher compliance with five of eight Get With The Guidelines-Stroke Quality Measures, which are reporting initiatives to measure quality of care.

These measures include aggressive use of medications, such as tPA, antithrombotics, anticoagulation therapy, DVT prophylaxis, cholesterol reducing drugs and smoking cessation — all aimed at reducing death and disability and improving the lives of stroke patients.

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“With a stroke, time lost is brain lost, and the Get With The Guidelines–Stroke Gold Plus Performance Achievement Award demonstrates Altoona Regional’s commitment to being one of the top hospitals in the country for providing aggressive, proven stroke care,” said Janet Ashurst, BSN, CCRN, neuroscience clinical coordinator. “We will continue with our focus on providing care that has been shown in the scientific literature to quickly and efficiently treat stroke patients with evidence-based protocols.”

“Altoona Regional is to be commended for its commitment to implementing standards of care and protocols for treating stroke patients,” said Lee H. Schwamm, M.D., chair of the Get With The Guidelines National Steering Committee and director of the TeleStroke and Acute Stroke Services at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. “The full implementation of acute care and secondary prevention recommendations and guidelines is a critical step in saving the lives and improving outcomes of stroke patients.”

Get With The Guidelines–Stroke uses the “teachable moment,” the time soon after a patient has had a stroke, when they are most likely to listen to and follow their health care professional’s guidance. Studies demonstrate that patients who are taught how to manage their risk factors while still in the hospital reduce their risk of a second heart attack or stroke.

Through Get With The Guidelines–Stroke, customized patient education materials are made available at the point of discharge, based on patients’ individual risk profiles. The take-away materials are written in an easy-to-understand format and are available in English and Spanish. In addition, the Get With The Guidelines Patient Management Tool gives health care providers access to up-to-date cardiovascular and stroke science at the point of care.

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“The time is right for Altoona Regional to be focused on improving the quality of stroke care by implementing Get With The Guidelines–Stroke. The number of acute ischemic stroke patients eligible for treatment is expected to grow over the next decade due to increasing stroke incidence and our large aging population,” Ashurst said.

According to the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association, stroke is the third leading cause of death in the United States and a leading cause of serious, long-term disability. On average, someone suffers a stroke every 45 seconds; someone dies of a stroke every three minutes, and 795,000 people suffer a new or recurrent stroke each year.

For more information on Get With The Guidelines, visit www.americanheart.org/getwiththeguidelines.

Altoona Regional is a nonprofit community health care provider. Two acute-care hospitals anchor the 497-bed system, which includes more than 20 affiliated health care companies. Altoona Regional offers centers of excellence in cancer care, heart care, neurosciences, behavioral health, vascular and wound care and much more. Its Regional Trauma Center serves more than 20 counties in Central Pennsylvania. The mission of Altoona Regional Health System is for exceptional people to provide exceptional health care.

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