



For Immediate Release

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Christiana Care's Heart Alert program treats patients 36 percent faster

Door to balloon treatment time 36 percent faster than national average

Wilmington, DE (January 16, 2004) – When a patient arrives at Christiana Care Emergency Department experiencing a heart attack, the medical team's response is a "Heart Alert," a special code that helps produce excellent clinical results.

Immediate preparation

In a Heart Alert, all appropriate staff, including the Emergency Department, CICU nurses, Cardiac Catheterization Lab team, and interventional cardiologists, immediately prepare to treat the patient without a moment of unnecessary delay," according to Elizabeth Wykpisz, RN, MS, MBA, vice president, of the Center for Heart & Vascular Health/Critical Care Services. If primary angioplasty is found to be the best option, the patient is upgraded to a "Heart Code" and sent directly to the cardiac catheterization lab for angioplasty and, more often than not, placement of a stent to remove a blockage causing the heart attack and restore blood flow, minimizing damage to the heart muscle.

On average, at Christiana Hospital, patients needing angioplasty have the blockage removed in the Cath lab within 66 minutes of arrival, a pace that is much better than the national average of 103 minutes. That's 36 percent faster than the average for all hospitals listed in the National Registry of Myocardial Infarction (NORMI) research database. The NORMI contains data on 1,283 emergency health care providers nationwide and uses it to measure how quickly heart attack patients are treated.

Opening the blockage in the coronary arteries in an hour-and-six minutes makes it possible for 75 percent of our Heart Code patients to receive angioplasty in less than the 90-minute NORMI benchmark, compared with 34 percent for all other hospitals monitored in the registry. Christiana Care averages 245 patients per year who receive angioplasty for myocardial infarction.

One of 12 top hospitals

The program also recently attracted the attention of researchers from Yale University studying the internal workings of hospitals that do well in terms of caring for patients who suffer a heart attack. The researchers, who visited last September, chose Christiana Care as one of 12 hospitals in the United States that either met the quality benchmark of 90-minutes from arrival at the hospital to treatment, or showed significant improvement over time. The researchers hope to use the information gathered at Christiana Hospital to further study ways in which other hospitals can streamline their treatment methods for heart attack patients.

Christiana Care Health System, which traces its roots back to 1888, is one of the region's largest not-for profit health care providers, serving the people of Delaware as well as neighboring Maryland, Pennsylvania and New Jersey. A teaching hospital, Christiana Care is recognized as a regional center for excellence in cardiology, cancer and women's health services, as well as Level-I trauma care and Level-3 neonatal intensive care (both highest intensity). Christiana Care operates two hospitals, long-term and transitional care services and an extensive range of outpatient and home health services. Last year, Christiana Care provided more than \$37 million of charity care.