



**Licking Memorial
Health Systems**

Taking Quality To Heart

...a community report on patient care quality



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Take a few minutes to read this month's quality report.
You'll soon discover why Licking Memorial Hospital has been named
one of the nation's 100 Top Hospitals for three consecutive years.

Stroke Care... How do we compare?

1. A stroke, or "brain attack," occurs when blood circulation to the brain stops. This causes the brain cells to die from a decrease in oxygen delivered to the brain. A better understanding of the causes of stroke has helped people to make lifestyle changes that have cut the stroke death rate nearly in half in the last two decades.¹

	LMH 2000	LMH 1/01-3/01	National
% of stroke patients who die	4.5%	2.2%	10.0% ²

2. LMH uses a clinical practice guideline to ensure stroke patients receive all of the appropriate care for their condition. One quality measurement is if a blood-thinning medication is prescribed at discharge. This blood-thinning medication prevents clots from forming and improves blood flow.

	LMH 2000 ³	LMH 2001 ⁴	State Average ⁵
% with blood-thinning medication at discharge	68.0%	94.9%	79.7%

3. A person who has symptoms of a stroke needs to seek emergency medical care immediately. A clot-busting drug, also known as a thrombolytic drug, may only be given up to three hours after the initial onset of symptoms. Much like a heart attack, (time is muscle) with a brain attack *time is brain*. It is also vital that a CT scan be performed to determine if the patient is a candidate for a thrombolytic drug.

	LMH 2000 ³	LMH 2001 ⁴	State Average ⁵
Average minutes from door to CT scan	18	16.3	58.5
Average minutes from door to drug	93	80	100.0

1 National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, National Institutes of Health "Brain Basics: Preventing Stroke" brochure July, 2000.
2 Benchmark from Maryland Hospital Association fourth quarter 2000 data representing 425 health care institutions.
3 LMH data obtained from clinical practice guidelines October through December 2000.
4 LMH data obtained from clinical practice guidelines January through March 2001.
5 Benchmark from KePro National Stroke Project, July through December 1999.

SUCCESS STORY

Ask Michael Call how he is doing today and he'll tell you he's "fine as twine and twice as handy." But his prognosis wasn't always so good.

"I was never sick a day in my life until I reached 60 - then things went downhill from there," Michael laughed. He suffered a heart attack and had triple bypass surgery. Then, during a routine physical exam a few years later, his family doctor heard gurgling noises in his neck and suspected blockage of his carotid arteries.

Michael's doctor sent him to the Vascular Lab at Licking Memorial Hospital for doppler ultrasound imaging. This is a painless, noninvasive test in which sound waves above the range of human hearing are sent into the neck. Echoes bounce off the moving blood and the tissue in the artery and can be formed into an image. In carefully calibrated ultrasound laboratories such as LMH, ultrasound studies can be up to 95 percent accurate.

Michael's vascular study indicated a complete blockage of his right carotid artery and an 80% blockage of his left carotid artery. "My surgeon said it didn't look good," Michael recalled.

The surgeon sent Michael for an angiogram at Licking Memorial's Radiology Department to confirm the vascular results. For this procedure, an X-ray of the carotid artery is taken after a special dye is injected into another artery in the leg or arm. The angiogram confirmed the vascular results.

"My surgeon told me that I'd already lost the carotid artery on the right side, and that there was nothing they could do for it," Michael said. "But he said surgery was possible to restore blood flow to my left side and decrease my risk for serious stroke."

The surgery, however, had its own risks. "My surgeon was very detailed and very nice about explaining everything to me. I totally understood my options," Michael stressed. "But the way I saw it, if I let it go, it's a danger anyway...so what choice did I really have?"

Michael opted for the surgery, called a carotid endarterectomy. The procedure was successful. Michael did have a brief episode in the recovery room where he lost feeling in some of his extremities, but he quickly recovered.

"When things like this happen in your life, you just prepare yourself and try not to worry," Michael professed. "I smoked for years and didn't get enough exercise. Now I don't smoke and I'm more physically active. It's mind over matter."

"I remember before my surgery I just said a prayer that I would be able to finish raising my two youngest daughters. And now I am," Michael smiled. "I've been around the block a few times, but I'm thankful for what I've got. Life is good."



Michael Call

Learning About Stroke is a Must

America is entering a new phase of improved medical care. Awareness has improved in identifying the warning signs of a heart attack, which are chest pain and shortness of breath. We are now learning to fight stroke. The warning signs for a stroke, or "brain attack," are weakness and numbness, confusion and trouble talking. "Just as a heart attack is a blockage of blood to the heart, a brain attack is a blockage of blood to the brain" states Dr. Joshua Nelson, a Neurologist at Licking Memorial Hospital. He adds "this does not result in pain, but produces the confusing symptoms of inability to walk, talk and act normally. It is these warning signs that we can now watch for and take very seriously as they can lead to permanent paralysis and disability."

The Neurology Department at Licking Memorial Hospital remains active in community education. Both Dr. Mourad Abdelmessih and Dr. Joshua Nelson give classes to patient support groups. In addition to educating the patient, both physicians are active in community education by teaching ACLS classes, educating paramedics, updating the medical staff, and even frequently talking on the local radio stations. The overall message is clear that you can prevent a stroke if you know what to look for.

To prevent stroke, you need to exercise, stop cigarette use, control blood pressure and blood sugar, keep cholesterol low and eat a diet low in fats. Your family doctor can assist you in determining your risk for stroke and your treatment options. Treatment options may include use of blood-thinning medication, an ultrasound evaluation of the carotid arteries in the neck, and possible surgical removal of the blockage.

Stroke Warning Signs

Warning signs are clues sent by your body that indicate your brain is not receiving enough oxygen. If you observe one or more of these signs of a stroke or "brain attack," call 911 immediately and seek medical care.

- Transient ischemic attacks (TIAs) are "mini-strokes" that produce stroke-like symptoms but no lasting damage. Recognizing and treating TIAs can reduce your risk of a major stroke.
- Sudden numbness or weakness of face, arm or leg especially on one side of the body
- Confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Difficulty with walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden severe headache with no known cause.

**"...just prepare yourself and try not to worry."
- Michael Call**

Visit www.lmhealth.org to review other LMHS quality report cards. Also, if you have a suggestion on how we can improve our care, please call our Performance Improvement Line, 348-4641.