

ICAHN: Leading the way for stroke treatment in Illinois

ICAHN is the only organization in the state to lead a stroke initiative designed to prepare critical access hospitals for official designation as Emergent Stroke Ready Hospitals (ESRH). The Illinois Stroke Law passed in August 2009 calls for EMS to take stroke patients to the nearest designated stroke center for rapid triage and treatment. Yet no funding was provided to create leadership, training, hub and spoke networks, nor a consistent measurement tool to ensure consensus measures are used to report data (required for designation from the state).

Successful treatment of stroke cannot be thought of as a single inpatient procedure. Instead stroke care should be provided in a system that provides coordination along the entire care continuum, from primary prevention through rehabilitation.

Stroke is a complex and time-sensitive disease. Because of that, stroke requires emergency departments to be prepared to provide rapid triage and treatment, ensuring patients are evaluated with proper clinical tools. It also becomes imperative that a treatment plan is determined and implemented within 60 minutes of the time the patient arrives. For acute ischemic strokes, the most common type of stroke, only one drug is available. In rural areas where there is not a neurologist, it must be given by the emergency stroke team within three hours of the onset of stroke for qualified patients. Other patients should be transferred immediately to a primary or comprehensive stroke center for interventional and complex treatment by specialists.

For three years now, ICAHN has provided the leadership and training needed to prepare hospitals for designation as an Emergent Stroke Center, and 26 critical access hospitals are actively measuring their results and showing continuous improvement. We hope hospitals can receive their official designation as an Emergent Stroke Center by January 2014, if the necessary Illinois administrative rules have been approved. For more information, contact Peggy Jones, ICAHN Stroke Consultant, at pjones@icahn.org.

Hot Topics in Stroke: New Anticoagulant Drugs

One of the hottest topics around stroke these days relates to Atrial Fibrillation. AF is a type of irregular heartbeat. It is caused when the two upper chambers of the heart (atria) beat rapidly and unpredictably, producing an irregular heartbeat. AF raises stroke risk because it allows blood to pool in the heart. When blood pools, it tends to form clots which can then be carried to the brain, causing a stroke. Long-term untreated AF can also weaken the heart, leading to heart failure. More than 70 percent of AF patients who have strokes will die. While an estimated 2.2 million people are diagnosed with AF, it is estimated that one-third of Americans who have it are still undiagnosed.

New Anticoagulant Drugs and Therapies: Educational Webinar Series

ICAHN and INET have partnered together to provide our members with a series of accredited educational programs for physicians, nurses and others to learn how to define therapeutic uses for

the drugs, recognize the risks and benefits, contrast the new drugs with the old drugs (such as Coumadin) and improve anticoagulant drug safety. More information about this series and how to register can be found on the ICAHN website.

Community Education for Stroke

As part of the ICAHN Stroke Initiative, we ask critical access hospitals and their community partners to offer at least four stroke-specific educational activities in the community each year. ICAHN offers free stroke materials and step-by-step guides to providing education in the schools, churches, workplaces and organizations in your communities. In the last 12 months, our communities have benefited from over 50,000 pieces of materials distributed and over 15,000 participants signed the pledge to act fast when stroke signs occur by calling 911 immediately and getting to the hospital as soon as the stroke symptoms begin. For more information on free stroke materials, contact pjones@icahn.org.