



Farmerville, Louisiana, April 2016. Stroke patients at Union General Hospital now have immediate access to highly specialized vascular neurologists as the result of a partnership between Union General Hospital and Ochsner Clinic Foundation in New Orleans (Ochsner).

Through this network, emergency department physicians have the ability to consult immediately with Ochsner vascular neurologists 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year using telemedicine equipment to determine the best treatment options for stroke patients.

Telemedicine programs improve the quality of care for patients outside of urban areas by allowing them access to specialists and by reducing the costs associated with travel and the time spent away from work and family. “If you don’t live near a major hospital, you shouldn’t have fewer options,” says Liz Cothren, Director of Telemedicine at Ochsner. “With the push of a button, within seconds of getting on an internet browser, you’re able to interact with a provider,” added Cothren.

Ischemic stroke is caused by a blockage in a blood vessel that stops the flow of blood to the brain and deprives the surrounding brain tissue of oxygen. In the absence of oxygen, the brain cells in the immediate area begin to die, causing permanent brain damage, disability or death. Two million brain cells die every minute during a stroke, so immediate medical attention can save a life and limit disabilities.

When a patient comes into the emergency department at Union General Hospital with the symptoms of an acute ischemic stroke, a computer with an advanced webcam will be brought to the bedside where the clinical team will connect with a vascular neurologist on call at Ochsner. The neurologist, patient and clinical team at Union General Hospital can see and speak to each other throughout the consult. The physician will examine the patient and review the CAT scan of the patient’s head, providing guidance on advanced treatments within minutes.

In many cases, Telestroke consultation will allow patients to stay at Union General Hospital. In more complicated cases the patient may need to be transferred to Ochsner or another facility for specialized treatment. Telestroke is still beneficial in these cases because the neurologist will have already met and started treatment with the patient.

May is National Stroke Awareness month. Know the signs and symptoms of having a stroke. If you think someone may be having a stroke, act F.A.S.T:

- **F**ace: Ask the person to smile. Does one side of the face drop?
- **A**rm: Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?
- **S**peech: Ask the person to repeat a simple phrase. Does the speech sound slurred or strange?
- **T**ime: Time is critical to protecting brain damage. If you observe any of these signs, call 911 immediately.

80% of strokes are preventable – now is the time to act!

You can prevent stroke by following Life's Simple 7 tips:

1. Manage Blood Pressure
2. Control Cholesterol
3. Reduce Blood Sugar
4. Get Active
5. Eat Better
6. Lose Weight
7. Stop Smoking

Union General Hospital along with the National Stroke Association has a mission to reduce the incidence and impact of stroke by developing education and programs on stroke prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and support.

Call 9-1-1 immediately if you see one or more signs of a stroke.