PRESS RELEASE

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VALLEY HOSPITALS WIN “GOLD PLUS” AWARDS FOR CARE OF STROKE PATIENTS; FAST RESPONSE TIME IN TREATING “BRAIN ATTACK” VICTIMS

Valley Baptist-Brownsville, Valley Baptist-Harlingen only hospitals in Valley to receive “Gold Plus” Awards for Life-Saving Care for Stroke Patients, following Scientifically-Proven National Guidelines

BROWNSVILLE / HARLINGEN, June 2013 - Life-saving care provided by Valley Baptist physicians and employees has made Valley Baptist Medical Center-Brownsville and Valley Baptist Medical Center-Harlingen the only hospitals in the Valley to receive “Gold Plus” awards for care of stroke patients from the American Heart Association and American Stroke Association for 2013.

The national awards program, Get With The Guidelines, is designed to help ensure that the care hospitals provide for stroke patients is aligned with the latest scientific guidelines.

“Gold” awards for care of stroke patients indicate 85 percent or greater compliance with national quality achievement indicators, as set by the American Heart Association, for at least 12 consecutive months.

The “Gold Plus” awards were received by both Valley Baptist...
hospitals for meeting guidelines for additional quality measures. These measures – which include aggressive use of life-saving medications, such as anti-thrombotics and anti-coagulation therapy, along with cholesterol-reducing drugs and smoking cessation counseling -- are aimed at reducing death and disability and improving the lives of stroke patients.

In addition, both Valley Baptist-Brownsville and Valley Baptist-Harlingen also received the “Target: Stroke Honor Roll” award for fast response in treating patients who come to the hospital with life-threatening symptoms of stroke. “Honor Roll” status is given to hospitals which consistently treat stroke patients with life-saving medications within an hour after the patient arrives at the hospital. When it comes to stroke, every minute counts, because “time lost is brain lost.”

At Valley Baptist-Brownsville and Valley Baptist-Harlingen, a clot-busting medication called tPA (tissue plasminogen activator) is used when medically indicated to reverse strokes. This medication has been shown to significantly reverse the effects of stroke and reduce permanent disability. However, to be given intravenously (by IV), the medication is most effective if it is administered within three hours from the start of symptoms of a possible stroke.

Valley Baptist-Harlingen also has new endovascular treatment procedures, performed in a specially-equipped Bi-plane Lab / NeuroVascular Angiography Suite, which can be performed up to eight hours or more into a stroke. These new procedures provide Valley patients with a longer time window in which to survive strokes and hopefully minimize disabilities. However, treatment is still most effective the sooner it is started after the onset of stroke symptoms.

“Congratulations to the outstanding physicians on our medical staff, our caring nurses, and other health care professionals who are so dedicated to providing Valley patients with advanced, award-winning stroke treatment,” said Todd Mann, Chief Executive Officer for Valley Baptist Medical Center-Harlingen. “Our goal is to provide the highest quality and most compassionate care in a safe environment for our patients.”
“Quality patient care is foremost in all that we do at Valley Baptist Medical Center-Brownsville,” added Leslie Bingham, CEO for Valley Baptist-Brownsville. “We are very proud of our physicians and our employees, who have made us the only hospital in Brownsville -- and one of only two in the Valley -- to receive the ‘Gold Plus’ award for care of stroke patients.”

According to the American Heart Association, the Stroke Gold Plus Quality Achievement Award recognizes Valley Baptist’s “commitment and success in implementing excellent care for stroke patients, according to evidence-based guidelines.”

and Valley Baptist-Brownsville are to be commended for their 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.”

On average, someone suffers a stroke every 40 seconds; someone dies of a stroke every four minutes; and 795,000 people suffer a new or recurrent stroke each year, according to the American Heart Association. In the Valley, many residents are at risk for stroke because of high rates of high blood pressure and diabetes.

“The Get With The Guidelines–Stroke” program 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 healthcare professionals’ 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 stroke or heart attack. For more information on stroke, consult your physician and visit www.ValleyBaptist.net.
BACKGROUND INFORMATION - STROKE

Stroke is a type of cardiovascular disease that affects the arteries leading to the brain and the arteries within the brain. A stroke occurs when a blood vessel that carries oxygen and nutrients to the brain is either blocked by a clot or bursts. When that happens, part of the brain cannot get the blood (and oxygen) it needs, and that part of the brain starts to die.

Know the following warning signs of stroke and teach them to others – because with stroke, every second counts.

Warning Signs of Stroke

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg – especially on one side of the body
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden severe headache with no known cause

Stroke is a medical emergency – call 911 immediately if you experience symptoms. Learning to recognize the warning signs of stroke and acting quickly when they occur can mean the difference in surviving a stroke and minimizing long-term disability, or being physically and mentally devastated and dying from stroke. Help your loved ones by sharing this important information.

The number of stroke patients is expected to increase over the next decade because of an aging population and an increasing incidence of stroke. Many of the major risk factors for stroke – including high blood pressure, diabetes, and high cholesterol – are very common in the Valley.

Through the Get With The Guidelines–Stroke program, 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.
Light - List of Hospitals Nation-wide Receiving Awards for Stroke Care

http://www.heart.org/idc/groups/heart-public/@wcm/@hcm/@gwtg/documents/downloadable/ucm_446685.pdf

About Valley Baptist Health System

Valley Baptist Health System is an 866-bed faith-based regional health system located in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas. It is focused on helping people achieve health for life through compassionate service inspired by faith.

Valley Baptist extends many of its services beyond its facilities and into local communities, offering free screenings for the community, support groups and numerous educational opportunities. For more information, visit www.ValleyBaptist.net (and www.FaceBook.com/ValleyBaptistMedicalCenter).

About the “Get With The Guidelines” Program

Get With The Guidelines® is the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association’s hospital-based quality improvement program that empowers healthcare teams to save lives and reduce healthcare costs by helping hospitals follow evidence-based guidelines and recommendations. For more information, visit heart.org/quality
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Dr. Victoria A. Parada, Board-Certified Vascular Neurologist, serves as Clinical Director of Neurosciences and the Stroke Program at Valley Baptist Medical Center-Harlingen. Life-saving care provided by Valley Baptist physicians and employees has made Valley Baptist Medical Center-Harlingen and Valley Baptist-Brownsville the only hospitals in the Valley to receive “Gold Plus” awards for care of stroke patients and heart failure patients from the American Heart Association and American Stroke Association for 2013.
Dr. Luis Gaitan, Neurologist, serves as Medical Director of the Stroke Program at Valley Baptist Medical Center-Brownsville. Life-saving care provided by Valley Baptist physicians and employees has made Valley Baptist Medical Center-Brownsville and Valley Baptist-Harlingen the only hospitals in the Valley to receive “Gold Plus” awards for care of stroke patients and heart failure patients from the American Heart Association and American Stroke Association for 2013.
PHOTO

STROKE TREATMENT - Dr. Ameer Hassan, right, the Valley’s first specially-trained Endovascular Neurologist, performs interventional stroke procedures in a new Bi-plane Lab / NeuroVascular Angiography Suite at Valley Baptist Medical Center in Harlingen.
Caring nurses help care for stroke and other patients at Valley Baptist Medical Center-Harlingen and Valley Baptist-Brownsville.