

## UCSD Stroke Center Is First In San Diego To Receive Certification From National Healthcare Commission

November 8, 2004

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The University of California, San Diego (UCSD) Stroke Center, located at UCSD Medical Centers in Hillcrest and La Jolla, is the first stroke center in San Diego to receive certification as a "Primary Stroke Center" by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO).

JCAHO is an independent organization that evaluates and accredits nearly 16,000 health care organization and programs in the United States, setting the nation's standards in health care. The Primary Stroke Center certification is part of JCAHO's "Disease-Specific Care Certification" program.

According to JCAHO, the certification "recognizes centers that make exceptional efforts to foster better outcomes for stroke care. Achievement of certification signifies that the services you provide have the critical elements to achieve long-term success in improving outcomes. It is the best signal to your community that the quality care you provide is effectively managed to meet the unique and specialized needs of stroke patients."

"This certification reflects our deep commitment to front-line stroke care in San Diego," said Patrick Lyden, M.D., director of the UCSD Stroke Center and a UCSD professor of neurosciences. "The certification is important because it means patients can count on UCSD to deliver the highest level of stroke care across the continuum of care, from Emergency Department entry through rehabilitation and recovery."

He added that "eventually, other primary stroke centers may be certified in San Diego, but as an internationally recognized leader in developing the stroke center guidelines, we are especially proud to be the first."

Each year, the UCSD Stroke Center treats approximately 300 individuals. In the U.S., some 700,000 people suffer a stroke each year, experiencing major brain injury when the brain's blood supply is interrupted. Without oxygen and nutrients from blood, brain tissue starts to die rapidly, resulting in a sudden loss of function. The warning signs of stroke include a sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body; sudden confusion or trouble speaking and understanding; sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes, difficulty walking, dizziness or loss of coordination; or sudden, severe headache with no known cause.

Long a national leader in the treatment of stroke, the UCSD Stroke Center was recognized in 2002 by the University Health-System Consortium (UHC) as one of the nation's top academic medical centers providing stroke treatment. In the 1990s, the UCSD Stroke Center led the National Institutes of Health-sponsored clinical trials of a new clot-busting therapy for stroke called tissue plasminogen activator, or tPA, which has become a standard of care. Over the past two decades, the center has developed considerable expertise in the field of emergency resuscitation of stroke patients and continues to lead the community in the treatment of stroke, the education of physicians and patients, and the continued development of novel approaches to treatment. In 2003, the UCSD Stroke Center was awarded a \$5 million grant from the National Institute of Neurological Diseases and Stroke to develop pioneering techniques that could potentially extend brain-saving treatment to more patients.

There are 39 JCAHO-certified Primary Stroke Centers in the United States, and three others in California, at UC Irvine Medical Center, Stanford Hospital and Clinics, and Good Samaritan Hospital in San Jose.

Disease-Specific Care Certifications are awarded to health care organizations that provide disease management and chronic care services. The Primary Stroke Center certification is based on the Recommendations for Primary Stroke Centers published by the Brain Attack Coalition and American Stroke Association statements for stroke to evaluate hospitals functioning as primary stroke centers.

The importance of JCAHO disease-specific care certification was recently noted by Col. Nathan Erteschik, M.D., chairman of the 21-member Disease-Specific Care Advisory Committee.

"Like accreditation, certification recognizes practices that demonstrate improved outcomes of care," he said. "By developing the standards, the Joint Commission has publicly stated what is important in treating patients with chronic diseases."

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