

Building a Stroke Center with Excellence and Results - A Year's Journey

Mercy Medical Center, Des Moines

The creation of a center of excellence is the result of hard work and the dedication of a multidisciplinary core team. Such a team exists at Mercy Medical Center, Des Moines. Approximately two years ago the administrative team at MMC-Des Moines decided to focus on the third leading cause of death and leading cause of disability in the nation; stroke. At that time the hospital created the position of stroke team coordinator and began its journey toward creating a "Stroke Team". That dream team was comprised of nurses, physicians, radiologists, lab technicians, physical medicine and rehabilitation specialists, and administrative personnel. The directive at that time was to ensure that a program was established with the goals of improving delivery of patient care and ultimately achieving Stroke Center Certification from the Joint Commission. What made this goal unique was the time frame; these goals were to be met within one year. A tremendous effort was put forth, creating a "Stroke Alert" protocol, reviewing and revising order sets and care maps, assuring that all protocols were evidence based and that practice then applied to the patients we serve. Staff education and training was undertaken, as well as community education. New initiatives were introduced, such as the nursing bedside swallow screen.

The reward for all this effort came first in the improved delivery of care to the patients we serve, and the announcement in August of 2007 that the Joint Commission had awarded Mercy Medical Center, Des Moines status as a Certified Stroke Center of Excellence, just one year after the process was initiated.