Santa Barbara Cottage Hospital and Marian Medical Center Designated as Cardiac Care Receiving Centers

On Tuesday, August 3, 2010, The Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors formally designated Santa Barbara Cottage Hospital and Marian Medical Center as centers to provide a Comprehensive Cardiac Care System for Santa Barbara County. The goal of the system is to reduce to ninety minutes or less the time from recognition of a cardiac event known as S-T Elevation Myocardial Infarction (STEMI), to definitive treatment.

The Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Agency, in collaboration with all of our local hospitals and pre-hospital providers has developed and initiated a Comprehensive Cardiac Care System for Santa Barbara County. Dr. Angelo Salvucci, Medical Director for the Santa Barbara County EMS Agency states that, “Every minute that we can decrease the time from recognition to treatment saves valuable heart muscle and significantly improves the long term outcomes for our patients.” The time goal of 90 minutes meets the new national standards recommended by the American Heart Association and the American College of Cardiology.

Acute myocardial infarction (heart attack) remains the leading cause of death for adults in the United States. Coronary Heart Disease was the leading cause of premature and all death in Santa Barbara County in 2007, accounting for 472 of the total 2,787 deaths, according to the “Community Health Status Report 2009” produced by Santa Barbara County Public Health Department.

Coronary Heart Disease generally refers to arteries clogged with cholesterol and fat deposits that restrict the flow of blood and oxygen to the heart. When the flow of blood to the heart is cut off, a heart attack results, causing permanent damage to the heart muscle. STEMI is the most serious form of heart attack. The preferred treatment method for this condition is a specialized procedure known as cardiac catheterization or
Percutaneous Coronary Intervention (PCI.). Marian Medical Center and Santa Barbara Cottage Hospital, both with PCI capabilities, have been approved as designated STEMI Receiving Centers. These two hospitals have worked hard to meet specific standards that include required equipment and personnel to provide rapid intervention and care, as well as internal policies, procedures and quality improvement processes that support the county-wide STEMI System.

Paramedics previously transported all cardiac patients to the nearest hospital. If the receiving hospital did not have cardiac catheterization capability, some patients required secondary transfer to a facility with these capabilities. The new Cardiac Care System has set standards to provide for the transport of 9-1-1 STEMI patients directly to our approved STEMI Receiving Centers. Recently, a community member awoke in the night to excruciating chest pain. Within minutes of calling 911, paramedics were at the patient’s side. Three minutes later, a newly upgraded field EKG provided an initial diagnosis of a STEMI. Paramedics were able to bypass a closer hospital and take this patient from their home directly to a STEMI Receiving Center. Because of this, the patient was able to receive definitive treatment in less than an hour. Today the patient is home with their family, once again a healthy and active member of the community.

The Comprehensive Cardiac Care System is truly a collaboration of the many agencies and medical professionals who make up Santa Barbara County’s emergency medical care community.

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