

STANLY REGIONAL PROGRAM TO BE USED BY OTHER HOSPITALS

A pilot program developed by the North Carolina Stroke Association (NCSA) and Stanly Regional Medical Center to help stroke patients will soon be used by other hospitals across the state.

For the past eight years, Stanly Regional has partnered with the NCSA and its Community Stroke Identification and Prevention Program. Because of this long-standing relationship, the association chose Stanly Regional as the pilot site for a new program called *Beyond the Hospital*.

Spearheaded by the Stanly Regional's Disease Management & Health Promotion staff, a team of nurses, dietitians, pharmacists, case managers, physical therapists and speech therapists identified some barriers that hospital staff faced when trying educate stroke patients.

"We wanted to make every effort to educate patients on the issues that they may be confronted with during and after a stroke," explained Margaret Rudisill, RN, BSN, CDE, Stroke Coordinator and Director of Disease Management/Health Promotion at Stanly Regional.

As a result, the team created an education manual containing information specific to each discipline involved in the treatment of stroke. The NCSA developed a three-month follow-up questionnaire to determine if stroke survivors are retaining the information presented to them during their hospitalization that the team utilizes to improve their patient education process.

"The program targets stroke prevention, but in the case of the hospitalized patient, it specifically targets prevention of another stroke through patient education," said Rudisill. "The bottom line is that patient outcomes will improve."

The risk of recurrent stroke is up to 10 percent in the week after a transient ischemic attack or minor stroke, according to Dr. David Schmidt, a board-certified neurologist and medical director of the Stanly Regional Stroke Center.

"By targeting stroke and TIA patients with this multidisciplinary educational tool, hopefully the patients who need this information the most will be the ones who benefit," said Dr. Schmidt. "Obviously, primary care providers have a huge role in primary prevention of stroke, but when those efforts are unsuccessful, it is vital to spare every neuron available by preventing recurrent stroke. Knowledge won't prevent all strokes, but it definitely can reduce the risk."

Now, the NCSA is adopting Stanly Regional's program as its own and other hospitals will be duplicating it.

“Beyond the Hospital is proactive in its dual purpose to provide stroke survivors with crucial secondary stroke education and to furnish hospitals with patient outcome measurements. Both serve to enhance the overall program goal to improve the health of the community,” said Beth Parks, executive director of the NCSA.

Physicians at other hospitals are impressed with the new program.

“The *Beyond the Hospital* program is a real step forward in patient education and stroke care,” said Dr. Charles Tegeler, a neurologist at Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center. “Previous hospital stroke education and quality improvement activities really only measure whether the activity occurred, primarily evaluating processes, without measuring real, objective outcomes. *Beyond the Hospital* includes follow up to measure how effective the education was, allowing an opportunity for real quality improvement to better educate patients and families about stroke and how to avoid another one. The follow up will also include assessment of real, objective outcomes to see if the patient is taking medications properly, whether they have been re-hospitalized, and even their level of disability after the stroke. Through the **Beyond the Hospital** program, any hospital, whatever size, can now carry out true quality improvement based on objective outcomes, with the potential to significantly improve stroke care in North Carolina.”

“We are proud of the fact that our team’s efforts will benefit stroke patients all over the state,” says Rudisill.

Stanly Regional has been recognized for stroke education in the past. In 2002, the medical center earned a national award for its public awareness efforts.

“The community should be very relieved that Stanly Regional Medical Center is committed to leading the way in stroke management,” said Dr. Schmidt.