

Brain is Time - Know the Signs of Stroke

New advanced procedure program at OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony gives stroke patients a fighting chance

Stroke is the fifth leading cause of death, with one person dying every four minutes as a result.

Time is critical to minimizing the effects of stroke. That's why it's important we all know the signs of stroke and the immediate steps that need to be taken when a stroke hits.

"So, you want to remember the pneumonic FAST, F-A-S-T, face, arm, speech, time," says Dr. Ayman Gheith, Interventional Neurologist at OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center. "If the face is droopy on one side, if their, ah, if their arm is weak, if they hold their arms up and one of their arms is weak, if their speech is garbled, or slurred, or you can't understand them - it's time to call 9-1-1."

OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center is Rockford Illinois' number one hospital for stroke care and recently it got even better. The creation of a new surgical stroke intervention suite provides the medical center's two interventional neurologists, Dr. Ayman Gheith and Dr. Akram Shhadeh, a 3-D image of the brain so they can accurately see the blood clot causing the stroke, enter the brain with a catheter and remove the clot. If performed soon after symptoms occur, the procedure can often prevent the more serious effect of stroke and greatly improve recovery.

"The investment that OSF made is really in the forefront of medicine and forward thinking and our ability to allocate resources dedicated specifically for this patient population," says Dr. Gheith. "So, this is a machine that's only being used for stroke and stroke patients and neurovascular patients as well. So, aneurysm ruptures, subarachnoid hemorrhages, fistula repairs, all of that."

Dr. Gheith believes the surgical stroke intervention suite puts OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony on par with any major medical university in the country in stroke treatment. Still, he cautions, it's vital any patient experiencing symptoms of stroke get to the hospital as quickly as possible.

"If you or your loved one is suffering the symptoms of a stroke and we've talked about what they are - the FAST, face, arms, speech, time - don't waste any time, don't drive yourself, call 9-1-1," reminds Dr. Gheith. "That does a couple of things. On our end, we're ready for you, we know you're coming when your coming through the ambulance and we have all of our ducks in a row."

The public is invited to learn more about recognizing the signs of stroke at a free community education program at 6:30 p.m., Tuesday, September 19 at OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center. Registration is required at www.ini.org/community or 309-624-4091.