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ACUTE HEART ATTACK VICTIMS IN THE INLAND VALLEY TO BE ROUTED TO COUNTY DESIGNATED HOSPITAL

Los Angeles County Emergency Medical Services Agency has designated Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center’s Stead Heart and Vascular Center as one of 12 receiving centers for acute heart attack patients.

POMONA, CALIF., – Los Angeles County ambulances are now instructed to take patients, within a 30-minute radius, who are experiencing a ST-Elevated Myocardial Infarction to Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center and its Stead Heart and Vascular Center. As a result of this designation, paramedics in the field now work directly with hospital emergency physicians, cardiologists and clinicians to diagnose patients.

The type of heart attack known as a ST-elevated myocardial infarction (STEMI), or an acute heart attack caused by blood clots, can permanently damage heart muscle without early intervention. If a STEMI is determined, paramedics are required to bypass non-designated hospitals and transport to a designated STEMI Receiving Center (SRC). Prior to the SRC program, patients suffering from a STEMI were taken to the nearest hospital regardless of the cardiac services available at that facility.

Through support and a $3 million grant from the Annenberg Foundation and American Heart Association, Los Angeles County Emergency Medical Services Agency was able to provide essential 12-lead electrocardiograms (EKGs) to all LA County and City Fire Departments. The county’s Board of Supervisors approved an additional $4 million in September 2006. The goal is that by June 30, 2007 all emergency transportation vehicles will have a 12-Lead EKG.

“This program was established to treat acute heart attack patients with the most critical symptoms,” explains Dr. Bill Koenig, Medical Director of LA County Emergency Medical Services Agency. “Without the support of the county Board of Directors and the Foundation grant, we would not have the equipment necessary to quickly diagnose patients in the field.”

According to recent studies, rapid primary percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI) is the most effective strategy for acute STEMI. This “door-to-balloon” strategy is endorsed by both the American College of Cardiology and the American Heart Association. In fact, one aspect needed to qualify as a SRC is that hospitals must have established goals and policies to treat patients with an angioplasty within 90 minutes. The first 90-120 minutes after a heart attack is critical and often referred to as the “golden window.”

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"It is critical for these patients to be expedited through the ER and into the Cardiac Catheterization Lab," explains Deborah Keasler, director of the Stead Heart and Vascular Center at PVHMC. "Time is muscle and we are prepared to treat these patients within the golden window. Our cardiologists and cardiac surgeons can quickly diagnose the problem and provide the highest quality outcomes possible."

As a designated receiving center, the Stead Heart and Vascular Center at PVHMC is required to have both an interventional cardiologist and a cardiovascular surgeon on call. The Stead Heart and Vascular Center has also established a Cardiac Alert response team protocol utilizing staff from the ER, Stead Heart and Vascular Center’s Cardiac Catheterization Lab, cardiovascular clinical supervisors, and charge nurses. Since its designation in early January, four patients have been transferred to PVHMC with STEMI.

“The Cardiac Alert Team along with our on-call cardiologists and cardiac surgeons has drastically lowered our door-to-balloon times,” adds Deborah Keasler. “We are now averaging less than 90 minutes, which means lives are being saved and families are spared the tragic loss of a loved one. That is what this program is all about.”

Today, there are 10 receiving centers in Orange County and 12 throughout Los Angeles County. Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center is currently the Inland Valley’s only STEMI receiving center. Methodist Hospital in Arcadia and St. Jude in Fullerton are currently the next closest SRCs.

“There are slated to be 18 SRCs in LA County by early February and we are encouraging other qualified facilities to apply and be part of the program,” adds Dr. Koenig. “Our goal is to provide patients in the field with the quickest and highest quality experience possible. A lot of work is left to do, but we are certainly encouraged by our progress to date.”

While it is expected additional hospitals will be designated throughout the county, the Stead Heart and Vascular Center’s designation in early January marks yet another first it brings to the Inland Valley. In addition to being the region’s first Heart and Vascular Center, last year, the center was the first in the region to begin utilizing the da Vinci robotic assisted technology for cardiothoracic procedures.

“I think this designation from Los Angeles County reflects the quality and breadth of services we bring to the region,” explains Rich E. Yochum, Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center’s President/CEO. “Last October, the heart and vascular center celebrated 20 years of service. We will not rest on our past successes as we are continually looking for new ways to bring the best patient care to the Inland Valley.”

Having performed more than 50,000 diagnostic and interventional procedures and nearly 6,000 open heart procedures, the Stead Heart and Vascular Center has long been one of the most comprehensive cardiovascular centers in the region.

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While the success of the heart program has been evident for years by the many “firsts” it has brought to the region, the vascular and stroke programs are equally impressive and recognized in the industry. In fact, the heart failure and stroke programs recently earned a five-star rating, the highest possible, by HealthGrades®. The stroke program was also recognized as being ranked among the top five percent in the nation in 2006.

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About Stead Heart and Vascular Center
The Stead Heart and Vascular Center is a preeminent cardiovascular center in the Inland Valley. The award winning, nationally renowned heart and vascular center, became Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center’s first recognized Center’s of Excellence in 1986. Stead Heart and Vascular Center provides comprehensive cardiovascular services through wellness and prevention, diagnostic, interventional, and surgical care. In addition to cardiothoracic surgery, catheterization and electrophysiology, the center also offers vascular surgery, diagnostic vascular studies, interventional radiology, and rehabilitation and health exercise programs. In 2006, the center became the first designated heart and vascular center in the region and has a long history of quality outcomes and technological advancements.

About Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center
Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center is a 446-bed, not-for-profit, acute care, teaching hospital serving Eastern Los Angeles and Western San Bernardino counties. Staffed by more than 600 physicians, 2,400 employees and 800 volunteers, the hospital offers a comprehensive mix of medical services, including Centers of Excellence in Cancer, Heart and Vascular, and Women’s health. Founded in 1903, PVHMC is accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO).

PVHMC is one of only 277 hospitals in the county to be named a recipient of HealthGrades® 2006 Distinguished Hospital Award for Clinical Excellence, and is ranked among the top five percent in the nation for clinical excellence. The Hospital has also been recognized as a Benchmark Hospital by Solucient® for earning the 100 Top Hospital designation four times in the list’s 11-year history. PVHMC is one of only two California hospitals to earn this Benchmark designation, and no other California hospital has earned the 100 Top Hospital designation more than four times.