

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **American Stroke Association Applauds Launch of Emergency Stroke System of Care in Los Angeles County**

*New, county-wide system of stroke-approved hospitals, will provide improved response, treatment of LA County's leading cause of long-term disability*

(LOS ANGELES, November 16) – The American Stroke Association/American Heart Association (ASA) heralded the launch today of an approved Stroke Center system in Los Angeles County. The system has the potential to greatly improve response times, treatment, and overall outcomes for people who suffer a stroke in Los Angeles County. The initial launch will consist of the Los Angeles Emergency Medical Services (EMS) system and 9 participating hospitals, with plans over the next 1-2 years to have additional hospitals in LA County approved to provide treatments that can mitigate the damage to brain tissue cause by stroke, so that anyone suffering symptoms of a stroke in Los Angeles County can call 9-1-1 and expect that there will be a stroke-certified hospital nearby.

“We are very proud to be launching this regional system of organized pre-hospital care and designated Primary Stroke Center (PSC) hospitals in Los Angeles County,” said Jeffrey Saver, M.D., Director of the UCLA Stroke Center and one of the lead physicians working on the project. “This launch is a great first step toward our objective of ensuring that all Los Angelenos who suffer a stroke have access to brain-saving, standard-of-care treatment near where they live or work.”

Also known as a “brain attack,” stroke is the third leading cause of death in Los Angeles County and is either caused by a bleed (hemorrhagic stroke) or clot (ischemic stroke) in the brain that damages brain tissue. Because stroke injury worsens with each passing second, early identification and rapid treatment of stroke are critical to minimizing morbidity and mortality. Studies have shown that outcomes improve significantly if patients activate the EMS system early (by calling 9-1-1). However, while time to treatment is a critical factor, the type of treatment received for stroke is also a crucial element of treatment – which is why it is important to get patients to the nearest Joint Commission-certified Primary Stroke Center.

“Stroke centers provide a continuum of care from initial assessment through hospitalization and rehabilitation. Providing a focused approach, with dedicated stroke nursing and hospital beds, benefits stroke patients,” said William Koenig, M.D., Medical Director of LA County EMS. “Through this collaboration, we anticipate the network of primary stroke centers will grow throughout the county in the months to come.”

The result of cooperative work between hospitals and other stakeholders, including LA County Department of Health Services (DHS), County Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and others in addition to the ASA, the Primary Stroke Center system will be coupled with a patient destination policy that will enable the transport of select 9-1-1 stroke patients to a Primary Stroke Center – rather than to the nearest hospital – in order to optimize care and minimize death or disability from stroke.

“The launch of the Approved Stroke Centers is a proud day for the American Stroke Association in Los Angeles County,” said David Ross, immediate past Chairman of the American Stroke Association’s Los Angeles County Board of Directors. “We are thrilled to bring together so many talented and committed people on behalf of so many different organizations for the shared objective of stopping strokes from destroying lives in LA County. We are grateful to the Annenberg Foundation for providing financial support as we work to create the first county-wide system of care for stroke in Los Angeles.”

### **Learn to Identify a Stroke**

Knowing the warning signs of a stroke saves lives. Call 9-1-1 immediately if you experience, or observe in someone else, one or more of the following signs:

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden, severe headache with no known cause

Visit [www.strokeassociation.org](http://www.strokeassociation.org) for more information.

### **About the American Stroke Association**

The American Stroke Association, a division of the American Heart Association, is working hard in local communities throughout America. Its goal is to prevent, treat and defeat stroke through research, public and professional education programs and improved emergency care. Stroke is America’s No. 3 killer and devastates hundreds of thousands of individuals and families every year. In Los Angeles County and across the country, the American Stroke Association is working with hospitals through its *Get With The Guidelines – Stroke* program to ensure that stroke treatment meets the standard of care to minimize death and disability from stroke.

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