

UW Health: Rockford, Belvidere join University of Wisconsin telestroke network

Posted on Thursday, Dec 15, 2022

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

MADISON, Wis. – Two northern Illinois hospitals are the latest members of the University of Wisconsin Telestroke Network, headquartered at UW Health University Hospital.

Starting immediately, the emergency departments at UW Health SwedishAmerican Hospital in Rockford and UW Health SwedishAmerican Medical Center – Belvidere, which are staffed by experienced physicians who specialize in emergency medicine, will be able to virtually consult with stroke neurologists at the UW Health Comprehensive Stroke Center in Madison who can examine patients and their brain scans in real-time online.

This can mean quicker, life-preserving treatment for patients who arrive at the emergency departments experiencing stroke symptoms, according to Dr. Luke Bradbury, medical director, UW Health Comprehensive Stroke Center.

“Emergency departments don’t always have stroke experts on hand to provide guidance, but with this technology, we can be there in the room with them from 75 miles away,” he said.

Doctors in Madison “beam” directly into a patient’s room on a video screen mounted on a specialized cart that also carries a camera so the physician can communicate directly with the patient, their family and their care team.

This type of communication is critical because time is of the essence when stroke symptoms occur, for example, a clot-breaking drug called alteplase needs to be

given no more than 4.5 hours after the onset of an ischemic stroke, which is caused when a blood clot blocks blood vessels in the brain. Waiting too long to administer the drug can cause bleeding in the brain or death. Telestroke allows for the stroke neurologist to prescribe this medication quickly, in addition to providing counsel to the medical personnel on the scene.

Telestroke reflects the collaborative approach at UW Health; expanding access to specialty care without duplicating services available at community hospitals, Bradbury said.

This system means patients will receive the best possible care close to home, while having access to stroke specialists who are on call around the clock for consultations, according to Dr. Amanda Miller, medical director of emergency medicine, UW Health SwedishAmerican Hospital.

“We are so grateful to be a part of this program because it allows the best possible care for our patients,” she said. “Plus, patients can recover close to home and that is a huge benefit to them and their families.”

University Hospital has one of the first certified comprehensive stroke centers in the country, meeting standards to treat multiple complex stroke cases at the same time while providing advanced imaging and treatment capabilities, with specially trained staff and physicians on staff 24 hours a day and faculty engaged in stroke research.

Bradbury and Miller will be available for interviews today and a recorded interview with Bradbury is available.