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Neighborhood Heart Watch

Internet Streamlines Stroke Care

Post Staff

From the Issue

Minutes count when stroke occurs. Now, advances in computer technology are helping expedite the delivery of clot-busting drugs to treat stroke patients in rural areas of Georgia.

An Internet-based network, known as REACH, connects eight rural hospitals to stroke experts at the Medical College of Georgia (MCG). A video feed allows the consultant to examine the patient, view the CT scan, and then decide if treatment with tissue plasminogen activator (tPA) is needed.

Data from 194 stroke consultations Via the REACH system show the time between onset of stroke symptoms and treatment dropped 32 minutes during the study period. Sixty percent of eligible patients received tPA within two hours, and 23 percent received it within 90 minutes.

Changes to current Medicare and insurance company reimbursement stipulations are needed to promote more widespread adoption of this and similar telemedicine systems, said lead author Dr. David C. Hess, from the Augusta-based MCG.

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