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## **Ochsner Selects REACH Call for Statewide Telemedicine System to Improve Stroke Care in Urban and Rural Areas**

**(Augusta, Ga. – August 11, 2009)** REACH Call, Inc., the leading provider of 100 percent Web-based solutions for remote treatment of medical conditions such as stroke, today announced that Ochsner Health System will use the REACH turn-key telestroke and telehealth service to improve stroke care in urban and rural areas throughout Louisiana. REACH is typically installed in hub-and-spoke networks, where neurologists at a larger “hub” hospital provide consulting services to smaller “spoke” hospitals for remote stroke evaluation.

Ochsner Health System’s main campus, Ochsner Medical Center in New Orleans, will act as a hub, connecting to five “spoke,” community hospitals: Ochsner Baptist Medical Center in uptown New Orleans; Ochsner Medical Center-Baton Rouge; Ochsner Medical Center-West Bank in Gretna; Ochsner St. Anne General Hospital in Raceland; and Ochsner Medical Center-Kenner.

Dr. Kenneth Gaines, chairman of Ochsner’s Neurology Department, noted that all of Ochsner’s “spoke” hospitals, with the exception of rural St. Anne General Hospital, are in urban areas, yet not all have neurologists’ on-call; therefore REACH’s telestroke service will enable patients to receive immediate evaluation when every minute counts.

“Most hospitals are developing ‘spoke’ stroke care for smaller rural hospitals, but we see a huge need for urban hospitals, where often there are unmet stroke care needs,” he said. “REACH provides a way to link our hospitals that do not have neurologists on call to our main campus, where multiple stroke neurologists will manage the telemedicine system on a rotating basis.”

In addition to bringing improved stroke care to urban hospitals, Ochsner is expanding stroke care to other Louisiana hospitals. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recently awarded a three-year grant to the LA Department of Health and Hospitals Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Program to build a telestroke network in collaboration with Ochsner Health System and the American Heart Association. The purpose of the grant is to address the lack of access to stroke neurologists and availability of stroke treating hospitals in Louisiana through the development of a regional TeleStroke Network in southeastern Louisiana, and eventually statewide.

“This grant covers half of the up-front installation and maintenance costs for any hospital that wants to be involved in this program,” Gaines said. “We soon will take the system that we have put in place within Ochsner and rapidly expand it to rural areas, allowing us to cover the entire state.”

The TeleStroke Network addresses the following needs:

- Increased public knowledge of heart disease and stroke risk factors, signs and symptoms, and the importance of calling 9-1-1.
- Improved emergency response.

- Improved quality of heart disease and stroke care.

REACH was conceived in 2003 to quickly and remotely evaluate stroke patients, who often can be treated with the IV drug tPA within three hours to minimize long-term effects. The REACH solution delivers easy, efficient consultations, centralized data collection for reporting and analysis, and network-building expertise for strong referral networks. REACH has proven to have substantial clinical and economic benefits for participating hospitals. Currently, more than 65 spoke hospitals and 14 hub hospitals in eight states are using REACH.

Gaines, who had previous experience with REACH Call during his time at Palmetto Health Richland in South Carolina, said that Ochsner selected REACH for a myriad of reasons:

- **Experience:** “I have worked with REACH Call in the past, and the REACH telemedicine program has a long, proven track record with hospitals in eight other states,” Gaines said.
- **User friendly application:** “The REACH interface is set up in a logical order that intuitively follows the decisions that the neurologist will need to make,” he said. “The current version enables physicians to easily shift between screens, which is particularly useful.”
- **Flexible architecture:** Gaines needed to add features to Ochsner’s telemedicine system that were different from those used at other hospitals. “Hospitals often use REACH for the purpose of tPA administration and potentially transferring patients to a hub hospital, but we plan to keep many patients at the spoke hospitals. I need to provide a fairly comprehensive consult in the spokes that includes pieces that follow after we make a decision about tPA, such as administering statin medicines, conducting swallow studies, and incorporating physical therapy and rehab.”
- **Easy implementation:** “For hospitals that have no experience with telemedicine, it is great to have an experienced group of technical experts to tell you what you need to do, and guide you through each step in the implementation process,” Gaines said. “REACH Call has helped us set up a task force amongst all our system hospitals to determine what will be compatible amongst our facilities, and what will be different.”

**About Ochsner Health System:** *Ochsner Health System is a non-profit, academic, multi-specialty, healthcare delivery system dedicated to patient care, research and education. The system includes seven hospitals and more than 35 health centers located throughout Southeast Louisiana. Ochsner employs more than 600 physicians in 80 medical specialties and subspecialties and more than 300 clinical research trials annually. Ochsner was ranked one of the “Best Places to Work” by New Orleans CityBusiness in 2005, 2006 and 2007 and received the Consumer Choice for Healthcare in New Orleans for 12 consecutive years. Ochsner is one of “America’s Best Hospital” by U.S. News and World Report. Ochsner has more than 11,000 employees system-wide.*

**About REACH Call:** *REACH Call is a full-service telemedicine application services provider dedicated to eliminating the geographical penalty associated with access to specialized care, bringing time-critical emergency care for diseases such as stroke close to home. REACH Call offers complete, secure and robust web-based tools for healthcare collaboration and provides centralized data collection and reporting to support outcome optimization, clinical trials, and national registries. REACH Call was founded in March 2006 by Dr. David C. Hess and other leaders at the Medical College of Georgia. Its patent-pending technology is the industry’s leading web-based telestroke/telemedicine solution. For more information on REACH Call, visit [www.reachcall.com](http://www.reachcall.com).*

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