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West Jefferson Medical Center's Stroke Center Receives Get With The Guidelines Silver Quality Achievement Award

(MARRERO, MARCH 23, 2011) – West Jefferson Medical Center's (WJMC) Stroke Center has received the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association's Get With The Guidelines®–Stroke Silver Quality Achievement Award. The award recognizes WJMC's commitment and success in implementing a higher standard of stroke care by ensuring that stroke patients receive treatment according to nationally accepted standards and recommendations.

"With a stroke, the element of time is crucial from early identification to treatment and the Get with the Guidelines–Stroke Silver Quality Achievement Award addresses the important element of time," said Anthony DiGerolamo, the Senior Director for West Jefferson's Stroke Center. WJMC has developed a comprehensive system for rapid diagnosis and treatment of stroke patients admitted to the emergency department. This includes always being equipped to provide brain imaging scans, having neurologists available to conduct patient evaluations as well as using specific drug such as t-PA better known to the community as the "clot-busting" medication when appropriate.

To receive the **Get With The Guidelines-Stroke Silver Quality Achievement Award**, WJMC's Stroke Center for an entire year, consistently, met the requirements in the Get With The Guidelines–Stroke program. These include aggressive use of medications like TPA, antithrombotics, anticoagulation therapy, DVT prophylaxis, cholesterol reducing drugs, and smoking cessation. This twelve-month evaluation period is the second in an ongoing self-evaluation by the hospital to continually reach the 85 percent compliance level needed to sustain this award.

"The American Stroke Association commends West Jefferson Medical Center for its success in implementing standards of care and protocols," said Lee H. Schwamm, M.D., chair of the Get With The Guidelines National Steering Committee and director of the TeleStroke and Acute Stroke Services at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. "The full implementation of acute care and secondary prevention recommendations and guidelines is a critical step in saving the lives and improving outcomes of stroke patients."

Get With The Guidelines–Stroke uses the "teachable moment," the time soon after a patient has had a stroke, when they are most likely to listen to and follow their healthcare professionals' guidance. Studies demonstrate that patients who are taught how to manage their risk factors while still in the hospital reduce their risk of a second heart attack or stroke. Through Get With The Guidelines–Stroke, customized patient education materials are made available at the point of discharge, based on patients' individual risk profiles. The take-away materials are written in an easy-to-understand format and are available in English and Spanish. In addition, the Get With The Guidelines Patient Management Tool provides access to up-to-date cardiovascular and stroke science at the point of care.

Here at West Jefferson Medical Center we will continue daily to strive and focus on improving the quality of Stroke care by following the high quality Standards set by American Heart Association/American Stroke Association's "Get with the Guidelines for Stroke." As our population ages the incidence of acute ischemic stroke is expected to increase which heightens focus on stroke care," said DiGerolamo.

According to the American Heart & Stroke Association, stroke is one of the leading causes of death and serious, long-term disability in the United States. On average, someone suffers a stroke every 40 seconds; someone dies of a stroke every four minutes; and 795,000 people suffer a new or recurrent stroke each year.