Beating the “Window of Time” by Helicopter
Faster STROKE and STEMI Transfers
Thanks to Community Hospitals and now--EMS!

Air Care is well known for stabilizing and expediting scene trauma, but stroke and heart attack victims must also reach definitive care quickly for their best chance of survival. EMS providers are increasingly making these diagnoses rapidly in the field. Like community hospitals, they can also request immediate transfer to a stroke center or heart center by air. In fact, Air Care has been activated seven times this year by EMS services to a scene location involving a stroke or heart attack. Those practicing this progressive use of resources include Three Rivers Ambulance Service, Reading Emergency Services, and Huron Valley Ambulance.

STEMI* and stroke care should begin as soon as possible. Each condition has a narrow window of time to reach definitive care for the best possible outcome. Many patients initially require blood pressure control, airway management, and other stabilizing measures commonly performed in an emergency department. Air Care’s flight nurses can begin these measures on scene just as we do in the hospital while quickly moving the patient to definitive care.

Air Care should be activated immediately when stroke is identified by history and physical exam. Paramedics that identify stroke in the field can call Air Care to begin stroke care as the patient is flown directly to a stroke center like Borgess or Bronson in Kalamazoo. Likewise, Air Care should be mobilized immediately for patients who present at community hospitals with clinical signs of stroke before the patient is taken to CT (computed tomography) so no time is wasted. These patients will be transferred to a stroke center regardless of head CT results.

Similarly, Air Care can be activated for heart attack victims with classic symptoms and ST-elevation on ECG. These patients require no further confirmation of diagnosis and need immediate transport to a facility with heart catheterization capability, such as Borgess or Bronson in Kalamazoo. Again, deploying Air Care upon diagnosis can greatly shorten transfer times. The medical crew carries advanced cardiac therapies like heparin and nitroglycerin infusions and will implement these as indicated en route so no time is lost.

The Air Care flight team is a not only a great option for improved outcomes, but also prevents the temporary loss of EMS and nursing resources from the community when a critical patient must be transferred. Activate Air Care for stroke or STEMI presentations without delay!

*ST-elevation myocardial infarction (heart attack)

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When you call Air Care for assistance, you’re requesting critical care transport at the highest level in our region. As an extension of Borgess and Bronson Hospitals the Air Care medical crew sets a high standard not only for experience and qualifications, but also for continuing education. Two experienced nurses that are also certified paramedics are our standard medical crew, and difficult airways are our specialty. The team performs RSI intubation only after careful evaluation of the patient’s airway needs.

“No one at any level has a better, more consistent airway training program than West Michigan Air Care,” said Dr. Glenn Ekblad, The Medical Director of 18 years at WMAC monitors medical crew performance through intensive review of patient transport documentation. Dr. Ekblad’s enthusiasm is reflected in the agency’s rigorous education schedule:

- Weekly airway training
- Twice monthly education and case review meetings
- Intensive chart review process
- Surgical labs for chest tube insertion and surgical cricothyrotomy
- Standard evaluations and simulation labs for scenario testing

“Physicians at community hospitals may not realize they are liable for their patient’s care during transport,” said Dr. Ekblad, who also is an ED physician at Borgess. “The literature and our own region has seen poor outcomes when a single individual with infrequent experience in critical care is tasked with transporting a complicated patient.”

The medical crew’s experience is a welcome addition to the consulting process. DeWayne Miller, Flight Nurse for WMAC says the medical crew gives regional care providers a friendly team to collaborate with on critical patient decisions.

“We’re just extra help,” said DeWayne, who has saved many busy ERs a lot of time over the years by assuming care of a complicated patient with airway needs.

The Air Care medical crew works with thousands of health care providers in Southwest Michigan each year to help improve patient outcomes. When you need a rapid response consult for a critical patient transfer, activate Air Care.

Photo Submission

Thanks to Travis Rader, Paramedic at Medic One Ambulance for capturing this wintry moment at Lakeland Community Hospital Watervliet.

Have a great Air Care shot? Send it to photo@aircare.org. If we use it in print we’ll send you a hat and t-shirt.
Sometimes a traumatic call can haunt us and begin interfering with life. The cumulative stress of witnessing trauma and death can ultimately lead some to walk away from rescue work.

“I’ve seen too many leave the field because of this,” said Mike Norris, Team Coordinator for Southwest Michigan Critical Incident Stress Management.

The loss of well-trained, compassionate professionals is not only a loss to the public it’s very costly for organizations. Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) is a systematic debriefing process that can help mitigate traumatic stress. This has proven to be a healthy coping strategy, preventing health care and rescue workers from facing psychic trauma alone.

Large institutions like hospitals have long-recognized the value of CISM, frequently maintaining their own debriefing teams in-house. Fortunately, CISM in Michigan can be requested by anyone at any level. A CISM team leads providers through a series of questions in a group format so they can process the emotions associated with a traumatic incident. Further one-to-one counseling may also be offered. When a CISM team is called, all individuals involved in a critical incident should be invited to participate. Personnel like medical examiners and dispatchers, for example, are frequently overlooked but can be deeply affected by critical events.

The statewide number to request CISM services is 1-800-969-0025. Life Care Ambulance of Battle Creek funnels requests to Michigan Crisis Response Association (MCRA). MCRA leads critical incident stress management efforts throughout Michigan and more information can be found at www.mcrainc.net. For long-term, cumulative traumatic stress, individual counseling is recommended to promote healthy coping and functioning. Your employer may provide this benefit, or you can find a local counselor at www.mhweb.org.

Our thanks to Mike Norris, Portage Firefighter, Southwest Michigan Critical Incident Stress Mgr. Team Coordinator, and Michigan Crisis Response Association Board Member.
Air Care Exceeds 10,000 Safe Patient Transports
A Culture of Safety is No Accident

Air Care passed a milestone this summer that should not be overlooked with regard to exemplary safety in aeromedical transport. On June 30, 2011 Air Care completed its 10,000th safe patient transport just before 6 a.m.

The FAA has reported that most HEMS accidents are preventable. Air Care is non-profit and non-competitive which means that flights are accepted without the unsafe pressure of competition found in many other areas of the U.S. Air Care’s highly trained pilots heed weather warnings and do not accept flight requests that are potentially dangerous. Should unsafe weather conditions develop during a patient transport (this is Michigan after all), a safe landing is made and the transport is completed by Air Care flight nurses via ground transport.

There are many factors that go into a safe operation including good communication and situational awareness of potentially dangerous conditions. We hold ourselves and our EMS colleagues to standards that promote everyone’s safety through landing zone classes and on-the-spot feedback at helistops and scene landing zones.

Thanks for your part in getting everyone home safely!


Join your ROTORHEAD FRIENDS on Facebook! Look us up under West Michigan Air Care.
www.facebook.com/WestMichAirCare

The 2012 Calendars have arrived! First dibs went to our attendees at the Fall Conference. If you haven’t received your calendar in the mail, stop by our office and pick up a copy.