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What Every San Diegan Should Know About Stroke Symptoms
Receiving Quick Stroke Treatment is Key to Reaching Full Recovery

San Diego, Calif., (Oct 26, 2015) – Kaiser Foundation Hospital - San Diego is the recipient of the American Heart Association's Get With The Guidelines®–Stroke Gold Plus Quality Achievement Award and Target: Stroke Honor Roll Elite Plus. This is a distinct honor that only a few hospitals in San Diego have earned. This award recognizes Kaiser Permanente Hospital's commitment to success in ensuring stroke patients receive the most appropriate treatment according to nationally recognized, research-based guidelines based on the latest scientific evidence.

About 785,000 people in the United States have a stroke each year and according to the American Stroke Association, stroke is the number five cause of death and leading cause of disability. Of these people, 60 percent are reported to be female, making stroke the third leading cause of death for women.

A stroke occurs when a blood vessel in the brain is blocked or bursts. Without blood and the oxygen it carries, part of the brain starts to die. The part of the body controlled by the damaged area of the brain can't work properly.

"Brain damage can begin within minutes," says Kaiser Permanente San Diego Vascular Neurologist William Neil, MD, regional stroke champion for Kaiser Permanente Southern California. "That's why it's so important to know the symptoms of stroke and to act fast. Quick treatment can help limit damage to the brain and increase the chance of a full recovery."

If you are experiencing difficulty with your balance, eyes, face, arm or speech, Dr. Neil recommends remembering the phrase **BEFAST** when determining when to seek treatment.

Balance
Eyes
Face
Arm
Speech
Time to call 9-1-1!

"The sooner a stroke patient receives medical care, the greater the chance of surviving and minimizing any long-term effects," said Dr. Neil. "To be most effective, stroke treatments must be administered within the first three hours of the first symptoms," he added.

Other common stroke symptoms include:

- Sudden difficulty with balance, vision loss, weakness of face arm or leg, and difficulty speaking.
- A sudden headache that hits you hard and fast, and has no obvious cause

You can help prevent a stroke by controlling certain risk factors and treating or managing medical conditions that can increase your risk of having a stroke. According to the American Stroke Association, up to 80 percent of all strokes are preventable. More than half of all strokes are caused by uncontrolled hypertension or high blood pressure, making it the most important risk factor to control.

So what can you do to lower your stroke risk? Dr. Neil offers the following tips:
- Work with your doctor to manage and control high blood pressure or high cholesterol.
- If you have diabetes, keep your blood sugar levels within a target range.
- Don't smoke, and if you do, quit!
- Limit alcohol to 2 drinks a day for men and 1 drink a day for women.
- Maintain a healthy weight - Being overweight or obese increases your risk of developing diabetes, high blood pressure and other heart problems that increase your risk of stroke.
- Get at least 30 minutes of exercise a day.
- Follow a heart-healthy diet, rich in fruits, vegetables and high in fiber. Limit your consumption of foods high in sodium, saturated fat, trans fat and cholesterol.

NOTE: To receive the American heart Association Gold Plus Quality Achievement Award, hospitals must achieve 85 percent or higher adherence to all Get With The Guidelines-Stroke achievement indicators for two or more consecutive 12-month periods and achieved 75 percent or higher compliance with five of eight Get With The Guidelines-Stroke Quality measures.

About Kaiser Permanente:
Kaiser Permanente is committed to helping shape the future of health care. We are recognized as one of America's leading health care providers and not-for-profit health plans. Founded in 1945, our mission is to provide high-quality, affordable health care services and to improve the health of our members and the communities we serve. We currently serve more than 9 million members in nine states and the District of Columbia. Our expert and caring medical teams are empowered and supported by industry-leading technology advances and tools for health promotion, disease prevention, state-of-the-art care delivery and world-class chronic disease management.

Kaiser Permanente began serving San Diego in 1967, and currently provides care for more than 600,000 members throughout the county. Over 7,700 staff and more than 1,197 physicians care for our members at 25 medical facilities; Kaiser Permanente's San Diego Medical Center, which has 414 licensed beds and a 78 bed Emergency Department; and Palomar Medical Center, our plan hospital in North County. To learn more, visit kp.org/sandiego.

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