

Richard Dauben, MD Medical Director, Stroke Program



Does the recent successful Joint Commission survey for St. Joseph Hospital's Stroke Program signal a new focus on stroke care?

The Joint Commission's certification began in 2003, but we've been on the forefront of stroke care since the 1990s when we had a Neuroscience Institute. We were the first hospital in the county to give tPA and participated in several landmark trials on thrombolytic therapies. What we've built on that expertise has evolved into our current Stroke Center.

Our efforts over the past two years or so have culminated in our accreditation. This includes preparation by former Stroke Program Coordinator Jodi Caggiano, R.N., BSN; special training for our Med-Tele nurses; my becoming the medical director; mobilization of our stroke team neurologists and neuroradiologists; and rounding every week by the Stroke team, which includes myself, Jodi, the head nurse, physical, speech and occupational therapists.

Our volumes for stroke have steadily increased as we're an EMS receiving center

for stroke. With baby boomers aging we anticipate continued increases over the next 20 years.

What's the top priority for the Stroke Program?
Educating our community. Only five percent of patients arrive at the ER within the three hour window for intravenous thrombolytics and not many more within the six to eight hour window for interventional radiology. That's key to improving outcomes.

Does stroke care consume most of your time?
It's about 10 percent of my adult neurology practice. For the past 15 years I've also been the medical director of the Neurophysiology Lab here. I also do intraoperative monitoring for spinal surgeries via the Internet. From my office I'm communicating with the surgeons giving interpretations of testing. For CalOptima I'm helping develop an electronic referral program. I do iPhone programming, writing medical applications, including the NIH stroke scale in English and Spanish and a patient rounding program.

Tell us about your computer background.
I've been programming since my college days. Back when I started here in 1977, I used to tinker with computers, tearing them

apart and putting them together. Computers were my hobby, but it's paid off. More recently I was involved in the initial set up of our PhysicianConnect Gen2 system.

Do your colleagues embrace this automation?
Yes. Most like having everything online and welcome a better interface that provides immediate access to results and eliminates paper. Younger staff members in particular are very computer literate and eager to make use of new technology.

Aside from your practice with Pavilion Neurology Medical Group, Inc., how do you spend your time?

I play guitar and sing a variety of popular songs for small parties. I now have three neurology partners, so since 2000 I've been able to get away for two to three months each year on my 42 foot sailboat. I started in Newport Beach and sailed down the west coast and through the Panama Canal, learning Spanish along the way. I stopped at medical clinics and donated time, especially in Guatemala, and had fun playing music in the cantinas. Most recently I sailed from Cancun to Florida to Savannah, Georgia, where the boat is now docked. Next, I'm hoping to go to Cuba.



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