

DISTRICT HEALTH NEWS

Marin Healthcare District. Creating a Healthier Marin Together.

FALL 2013

ALWAYS READY

The Marin General Hospital Emergency Department

Running an efficient Emergency Department (ED) takes speed, coordination, and much-practiced protocols. Michelle Tracy, Director of Emergency, Trauma, and Transport at Marin General Hospital (MGH) explains, "When an ambulance calls with a trauma case on the way, we immediately mobilize our team." Typically, the necessary surgeons, specialists, nurses, and technicians are scrubbed and waiting when the patient comes in.



In a county-wide emergency, coordination extends even beyond the hospital walls. **As the county's ONLY Designated Trauma Center**, MGH serves as the Disaster Base Station. In a major emergency, the ED uses a computer program that links all area hospitals and emergency services teams to dispatch ambulances and coordinate patient transfers. Fortunately, disasters don't happen often, but even a typical day in the ED is quite busy.



Below is a sampling of patients from a typical day in the ED:

TRAUMA

- **Bike accident:** A man in his forties catapulted over the handlebar; despite fracturing three vertebrae and needing surgery, the cyclist avoided paralysis and his helmet protected him from serious head injury
- **Motorcycle accident:** A man in his fifties suffered a broken leg and arm, internal bleeding, and head and neck injuries
- **House fall:** A man in his seventies fell off a ladder and came in with facial fractures and internal bleeding

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

- Man in his twenties needed emergency cardiothoracic surgery after a virus caused such intense nausea and vomiting that his esophagus ruptured

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EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT

FAST FACTS

- **Number of patients seen last year: 35,000**
- **Average number of patients seen in a day: 100**
- **Trauma cases last year: 743**
- **Ambulance traffic for Marin County routed to MGH: 65-70%**
- **Top three traumas:**
 - > **Ground-level falls, often involving the elderly**
 - > **Car accidents**
 - > **Bike accidents**
- **Percent of ED visits for non emergencies: 25%**



**ALWAYS
READY**
Continued

- Girl in her teens had trouble breathing, esophageal spasms, and hyperventilation, and was treated with oxygen and steroids
- Woman in her sixties with cardiac arrhythmia (that turned out to be the aftermath of a heart attack) was admitted and scheduled for cardiac catheterization.

Whatever the day brings, the emergency/trauma team at Marin General Hospital is always prepared. Specialists in orthopedic, neurological, or vascular surgery are on call 24/7 to operate on trauma patients. As an **Accredited Chest Pain Center and Certified Primary Stroke Center**, the hospital gets advance notice from the ambulance when they are bringing in a stroke or heart attack patient. What's

more, the Emergency Department has technology that enables neurologists to remotely assess a stroke patient at the hospital, so anticoagulant drugs can be administered immediately, if needed.

Marin County residents can feel confident in knowing that their Emergency Department is there for them 24/7, with lifesaving capabilities and an accomplished, devoted team.

Stroke Treatment Just in Time

On Father's Day, 2012, TV journalist Doug McConnell woke up feeling strange. His dogs' barking didn't sound right.



Doug McConnell
Stroke Patient, TV Journalist

When he shushed them, his own voice sounded almost disembodied. He had to concentrate to move his left arm and there was numbness along the length of his leg. Doug was experiencing classic stroke symptoms, but he rationalized that the tingling was from an ongoing pinched nerve issue and got in the car to take the dogs for a hike. He was having trouble holding onto the steering wheel with his left hand and when he stopped for coffee, he dropped his wallet three times.

Doug hiked about a quarter of a mile before suddenly dropping the dog leash in a pile of leaves. Their rustling sounded strangely metallic to him. He called his son and told him he wasn't feeling well and was coming home to give his doctor a call. The doctor did not mince words. "This could be a stroke and you're 90 minutes into the three-hour treatment window! Have your wife drive you to Marin General Hospital right now. I'll call ahead."

Stroke is the leading cause of serious, long-term disability and the third leading cause of death in the United States.

The stroke team was waiting when they reached the Emergency Department. The on-call neurologist and stroke specialist, Dr. John Panagotacos, ordered an immediate MRI. It revealed a small stroke in the rear right side of Doug's brain.

Since 80 percent of strokes occur after age 50, a large percentage of Marin adults are now in the prime risk category. Knowing what to do if you think you're having a stroke is critical because the most effective treatment needs to be provided within three hours from the onset of symptoms. That's why Marin General Hospital has invested in state-of-the-art stroke care, becoming the county's **ONLY Certified Primary Stroke Center that can treat both ischemic and hemorrhagic stroke on site.**

Like many, Doug overlooked some critical warning signs. Now, he is following his doctor's recommendation to increase his medication, lower his cholesterol, and switch to low-fat lattes. Doug is now as healthy and active as before his stroke.

TIME IS BRAIN. ACT FAST.

If you suspect you or a loved one are having a stroke, you can use this simple mnemonic device, called FAST, to decide what to do:

Face: Facial droop, uneven smile

Arms: Arm numbness, arm weakness

Speech: Slurred speech, difficulty speaking or understanding

Time: Call 911 and get to the hospital immediately

Every Patient's Best Interests at Heart



December 27th was just another birthday for Jonathan Snyder. He had just wrapped up a backyard soccer game with his kids when he felt a sudden tightness in his chest and a tingling in his fingers. Jonathan's wife immediately insisted on driving him to the nearest hospital. Recognizing the need for advanced cardiovascular care, the local community hospital transferred Jonathan to Marin General Hospital (MGH). While he was in transit, paramedics performed a remote electrocardiogram in the ambulance and relayed the results to the hospital. "We receive 65-70 percent of all ambulance traffic in the county," explains Dr. Jim Dietz, Chair of the Department of Emergency Medicine at MGH. "In this emergency department, you have access to the full spectrum of what modern health care has to provide."

Jonathan went into cardiac arrest as he was wheeled through the door. He could

not have come to a better place for emergent cardiac care. Marin General Hospital is a certified chest pain center, with emergency department physicians and staff specially trained to rapidly diagnose and treat heart attacks. The hospital's full-service cardiac catheterization lab has an expert team available 24/7. MGH's "door-to-treatment" time, the length of time between when a patient comes in the door and the beginning of catheterization, is in the top percentile nationally. "By having a committed team, you can do amazing things," says

"You can't know what it means to get a second chance in life."

Dr. Brian Strunk, Co-chief of Cardiology at Marin General Hospital. "That's what's happened here and that's why we set a precedent for the rest of the country."

It took just 27 minutes from when Jonathan was brought in for the Interventional Cardiology team to complete a successful procedure and get his heart beating normally again. Dr. Strunk is justifiably proud of the results. "No one is any better than us in the Bay Area. If you are unfortunate enough to have a heart attack, there's no place better as far as the opportunity

When Does an Injury Require a Trip to the ER?

- Significant pain or swelling
- Inability to put weight on the injured area
- Inability to move the affected muscle or joint
- Numbness in the injured area, redness, or streaks radiating from the injured area
- Head or eye injury
- Serious burns
- Bleeding that won't stop or large open wound
- Broken bones and dislocated joints
- Injury involving loss of consciousness

to live. Not only to live but to live a full life afterwards." While he hopes his next birthday will be less eventful, Jonathan looks forward to many more.

"You can't know what it means to get a second chance in life."

Are You Ready for the Big One?

According to the U.S. Geological Survey, California has a 99 percent chance of experiencing an earthquake of 6.7 or higher. Nobody is ever really "ready" for an earthquake, but once the shaking stops, everyone in Marin needs to be ready for the aftermath.

Great California Shakeout

You can help prepare for an emergency by participating in events related to the Great California Shakeout. Visit the Safety Fair at the hospital for good information, snacks and fun.

Thursday, October 17

**Safety Fair at MGH, 11 am to 3 pm
250 Bon Air Road, Greenbrae**

- A mobile simulator where you can safely experience a simulated 8.0 earthquake
- Emergency disaster supply checklists for your home, car, and office
- Blood drive with the American Red Cross

- Earthquake preparedness supplies will be available for purchase



The Quake Cottage earthquake simulator

Did you know?



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Your primary source for high-quality care

HEALTH FACT

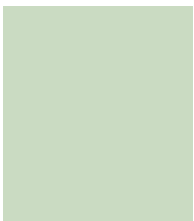
Interacting medications can be potentially dangerous, especially for seniors who may have prescriptions from a variety of specialists who are treating individual issues. It's important to do a yearly "medication management" review with your Primary Care Physician to see the bigger picture.

HEALTH FACT

Only 2 percent of adult Americans under 64 are currently immunized against tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis. The vaccines most of us received as children do not cover us for our whole lives. You could be at risk.

These are just a few of the many things a good Primary Care Physician (PCP) can help you with. As the doctor in charge of your overall health, your PCP's job is to know you well—and keep you well. A PCP treats you when you are sick, helps you manage chronic conditions, coordinates your care with any necessary specialists, and advises you on healthy choices. Make a healthy choice today by making an appointment with one of our expert PCPs.

For an appointment at any of our locations throughout Marin, call 1-855-830-6003 or visit www.marinhealthcare.org/centers.



100B Drakes Landing Road, Suite 250
Greenbrae, CA 94904

