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Kearney Fire and EMS to receive Spot A Stroke Award from Saint Luke's Marion Bloch Neuroscience Institute for recognizing Kearney woman's stroke symptoms

Award recognizes quick thinking in response to Kearney woman's stroke, leading to positive outcome

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (May 13, 2015) — July 2, 2014 began as usual for Linda Smith of Kearney, before taking a dramatic turn for the worse during breakfast. Her husband first noticed 54 year-old Linda's slurred speech, then the left side facial droop, and weakness on her left side. Thinking quickly, he called 9-1-1 and Kearney Fire and EMS responded within minutes. Paramedic Rod Barnhart and EMT Luke Pierce immediately identified Linda's symptoms as stroke. Understanding that seconds mean brain cells lost during a stroke, they stabilized her and quickly transported Linda directly to Saint Luke's Hospital of Kansas City, a nationally recognized Comprehensive Stroke Center capable of treating the most complex strokes.

En route to Saint Luke's, the Kearney Fire and EMS team contacted the Saint Luke's stroke team, and upon arrival Linda was immediately evaluated and categorized as a moderate to severe stroke. Thanks to Barnhart's and Pierce's quick thinking, she arrived quickly enough to receive tissue plasminogen activator, or tPA, also known as the "clot busting drug." tPA only may be administered within a specific window of time after onset of a stroke. Neuro interventionalists at Saint Luke's Marion Bloch Neuroscience Institute removed her clot, and within a few days, Linda showed dramatic improvement and was discharged to short-term rehabilitation for extremity strengthening.

The source of the stroke turned out to be a clot in Linda's leg. Likely her outcome would have been significantly different, if not for quick initial recognition of her stroke by Kearney Fire and EMS team.

On Monday, May 18, 2015 a team from Saint Luke's Marion Bloch Neuroscience Institute will present Kearney Fire and EMS with a Spot A Stroke award for their quick thinking and recognition of Mrs. Smith's stroke. Rod Barnhart and Luke Pierce of Kearney Fire and EMS will receive an award plus a pin for their name badge at a ceremony to be held at 6:30 p.m. at the Fire District Board quarterly meeting at Fire Headquarters in Kearney.

“Every minute counts when it comes to a stroke, because every second means brain cells lost,” said Jay McClintick, neuroscience outreach at Saint Luke’s Marion Bloch Neuroscience Institute. “Thanks to Kearney Fire and EMS’s quick thinking and recognition of stroke symptoms, Mrs. Smith ultimately received the proper care and achieved a positive outcome. Kearney Fire and EMS is an excellent example of how EMS providers are making a huge difference in positive stroke outcomes.”

Signs and symptoms of a stroke include:

- Sudden weakness on one side of the body
- Sudden numbness on one side of the body
- Sudden loss of vision – especially in one eye
- Sudden difficulty speaking or understanding
- Sudden severe headache

When it comes to stroke, time is of the essence. If you or a loved one is experiencing symptoms, do not delay. Immediately call 911 or seek treatment at your nearest hospital emergency room.

During Stroke Awareness Month, May 2015, Saint Luke’s is offering a free online Stroke Risk Assessment. To take the test, visit saintlukeshealthsystem.org/strokerisk.

About Saint Luke’s Health System

[Saint Luke’s Health System](http://saintlukeshealthsystem.org) consists of 10 area hospitals and several primary and specialty care practices, and provides a range of inpatient, outpatient, and home care services. Founded as a faith-based, not-for-profit organization, our mission includes a commitment to the highest levels of excellence in health care and the advancement of medical research and education. The health system is an aligned organization in which the physicians and hospitals assume responsibility for enhancing the physical, mental, and spiritual health of people in the metropolitan Kansas City area and the surrounding region.

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