

Stroke victims can require special care transfers, says WLAD

Western Lane Ambulance District (WLAD) is a leader in the state of Oregon in terms of the number of highly trained and experienced Critical Care Paramedics (CCP).

These paramedics can effectively handle a Critical Stroke Patient that requires transport to a definitive specialty Stroke Center, such as Sacred Heart Regional Medical Center at Riverbend.

WLAD CC Paramedic and Training Officer Rob Chance strongly recommends CCPs for these difficult transfers to Stroke Centers.

“One of the main concerns we have with our stroke patients is that if they are having intracranial bleeding (which occurs when a weakened blood vessel ruptures), we do everything we can to keep it

from getting worse,” said Chance, who added that the potential for blood clots is another reason blood pressure is carefully monitored.

“Labetalol is one of the medications we now carry on the ambulance, and is a beta blocker designed to treat the high blood pressure,” Chance said.

Another medication WLAD carries to protect against high blood pressure caused by a stroke is Hydralazine.

“Our critical care paramedics are specifically trained to use these vasoactive drugs to give our patients the best chances at preventing long term or permanent deficits,” Chance said

The American Heart Association recommends that the clot busting drug tPA can be used if the stroke occurs within three hours of emergency



COURTESY PHOTO

First responders prepare a patient to be transported by helicopter to receive emergency care.

department arrival. This drug is used in cases of an ischemic stroke, which occurs as a result of an obstruction within a blood vessel supplying blood to the brain.

It accounts for 87 percent of all stroke cases, and the goal of tPA is to dissolve the clot and allow stroke patients to regain normal function of their speech, sight and motor function — rather than being left with weakness or paralysis on one side of the patient.

Sometimes the ED staff start tPA as the paramedics are in the process of loading the patient in the ambulance, for the transport to the Stroke Center. Some stroke patients are so critical that they require endotracheal intubation and are placed on a ventilator for the course of the medical transport.

“Understanding and utilizing the ventilator requires a significant level of training and experience,” Chance said.

In addition to the ventilator training, the CCPs learn and train on the various medications that are used to sedate and keep the patient still, while the patient is on the ventilator.

“We become familiar with Propofol, Versed, Ketamine, Fentanyl, Rocuronium, as well as various other drugs,” Chance explained.

Typically, there are 2 para-

medics in the back with these critically ill stroke patients.

If time is a matter of concerns, and in many cases, it is, then it is imperative that the patient or family be offered air medical transport to the Stroke Center. There are several air medical agencies within the Western Lane Ambulance District. Weather permitting, they can gain access to appropriate landing zones such as the Florence Airport.

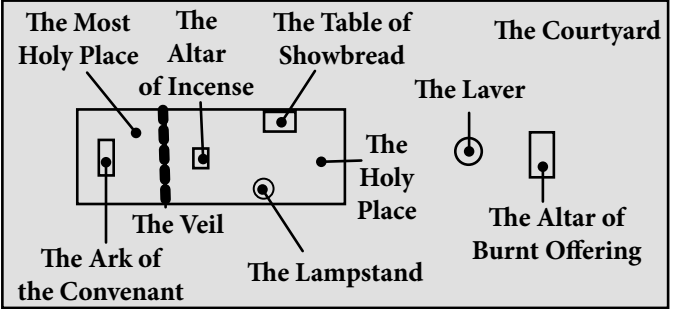
The air medical crews are all critical care trained paramedics or flight nurses. These paramedics have become Flight Paramedic Certified (FP-C), which is essentially the same as the CCP, but focuses on air rather than ground transport.

Air medical crews carry basically the same equipment and medications as WLAD ground ambulances.

The critical care paramedic curriculum is more than 100 hours in duration and is a nationally recognized program with classes conducted throughout the nation.

“It has been an amazing help to the patients that we serve throughout Western Lane Ambulance District and it is an honor and a privilege to be involved in this amazing program,” said Chance.

—Submitted by Al Krietz, M.A. EMT-PIPIO with WLAD



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know about it can be useful in the confusion of today’s world.”

The UU Fellowship, 87738 Highway 101 at Heceta Beach Rd., is wheelchair accessible.

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