



North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Health Service Regulation
Office of Emergency Medical Services

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MEMORANDUM

TO: All North Carolina Licensed Hospitals

FROM: Nadine Pfeiffer, Assistant Chief – Health Systems
Office of Emergency Medical Services

SUBJECT: Primary Stroke Center and Stroke Capable Hospital Definitions Clarification

DATE: July 27, 2010

Recently the Office of Emergency Medical Services (OEMS) has become aware that the definitions for Primary Stroke Center and Stroke Capable Hospital, listed in the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Triage and Destination Plan for Stroke, are in need of further clarification from this office as they pertain to the involvement of the OEMS. The Emergency Medical Services and Trauma Rules adopted by the North Carolina Medical Care Commission require each county EMS system to adopt EMS triage and destination plans specifying how ambulance providers manage certain types of patients. These plans vary from patients' ages to particular illnesses and injuries.

As our county EMS systems have adopted the triage and destination plans for stroke, there has been some misinterpretation as to whether a hospital providing services meeting the criteria under the definition of a "Stroke Capable Hospital" requires the OEMS to designate a hospital as such. This is not an accurate depiction of the function of our agency in relation to this definition.

Per North Carolina general statute and rule, the only hospitals the OEMS has authority to award any type of designation to, are to those who meet criteria for the management of trauma patients by the designation of trauma centers. All other designations awarded are unique to the respective accrediting bodies.

The language utilized in the EMS Triage and Destination Plan for Stroke template was specifically designed to provide guidance for each county EMS system in determining the appropriate health care facility capable of providing the level of care specific to the care need being addressed. Thus, the definitions of "Primary Stroke Center" and "Stroke Capable Hospital" and "Community Hospital" are listed on the template.

The hospitals that meet the definition of a Primary Stroke Center are those that are certified by the Joint Commission as a Primary Stroke Center. Hospitals that are identified as either a Stroke



Capable Hospital or a Community Hospital are those that the local EMS System have listed in their plan based on the terminology used in the Triage and Destination Templates. The definitions included in the Triage and Destination Templates are provided only as a guideline for EMS Systems in identifying a hospital's capability and are not meant to signify that any hospital has been "designated" based on any specific accrediting standards defined by the Office of EMS.

Our state is fortunate to have many health care facilities that provide exceptional care. These triage and destination plans are an additional piece to the excellent EMS system of care that all hospitals are a part of.

Should you have any questions please feel free to contact me at (919) 855-3960.

cc: Drexdal Pratt, Chief, OEMS
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