The Joint Commission, American Heart Association/American Stroke Association Announce New Thrombectomy Certification

Certified hospitals must meet identified standards for surgical removal of blood clots in patients suffering a large vessel occlusive ischemic stroke

(OAKBROOK TERRACE, Illinois – January 24, 2018) – The Joint Commission, in collaboration with the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association, the world’s leading voluntary health organization devoted to fighting cardiovascular disease and stroke, now offers a Thrombectomy-Capable Stroke Center (TSC) certification program. This new level of stroke certification identifies hospitals that meet rigorous standards for performing mechanical endovascular thrombectomy (EVT), a surgical procedure used to remove blood clots in patients who suffer from large vessel occlusive (LVO) ischemic strokes.

This is the fourth level of stroke center certification offered by the Joint Commission and the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association; additional certifications include Acute Stroke Ready, Primary Stroke and Comprehensive Stroke.
“Because of their higher level of care, hospitals certified as Comprehensive Stroke Centers by The Joint Commission or another national organization are the preferred location for transporting patients with suspected LVO strokes,” said David Baker, MD, MPH, FACP, executive vice president for Health Care Quality Evaluation at The Joint Commission. “But in a recent survey of The Joint Commission’s certified primary stroke centers, one-third of them reported that they also routinely performed endovascular thrombectomy treatment that could care for these patients. Multiple studies have proven EVT treatment to be effective in saving lives and lowering disability from stroke, particularly if performed within six hours of the last time the patient was known to be well.”

“In large areas of the country, people who suffer LVO strokes face longer travel times to reach a Comprehensive Stroke Center, which lessens their chance for a rapid thrombectomy and better outcomes,” said Edward C. Jauch, M.D., chair of the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association’s Hospital Accreditation Stroke Subcommittee. “Meanwhile, hospitals well-equipped to treat patients with LVO strokes may be bypassed because they do not meet existing requirements for comprehensive stroke center certification. The new Thrombectomy-Capable Stroke Center certification will help ensure that patients who need it can get timely treatment wherever they live.”

Through this new certification, which became effective Jan. 1, The Joint Commission and the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association will:

- Provide model language for state health departments regarding stroke center recognition;
- Develop educational tools and resources for EMS agencies; and
- Support the systems of care across the country that are providing patient access to appropriate stroke centers.

The Joint Commission sets rigorous requirements for its stroke certifications, guided by a Technical Advisory Panel of experts from leading organizations across the country as well as input from the field during public comment on proposed standards. Requirements for the new Thrombectomy-Capable Stroke Center certification were guided by the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association and additional scientific advice from experts across the country in endovascular therapy,
neurosurgery, neurology, critical care medicine and emergency medicine, emergency medical services and other disciplines responsible for comprehensive stroke treatment and stroke program management.

For more information on the Thrombectomy-Capable Stroke Center (TSC) certification program, visit www.jointcommission.org or email certification@jointcommission.org.

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About The American Heart Association/American Stroke Association
The American Heart Association and the American Stroke Association are devoted to saving people from heart disease and stroke – the two leading causes of death in the world. We team with millions of volunteers to fund innovative research, fight for stronger public health policies, and provide lifesaving tools and information to prevent and treat these diseases. The Dallas-based American Heart Association is the nation's oldest and largest voluntary organization dedicated to fighting heart disease and stroke. The American Stroke Association is a division of the American Heart Association. To learn more or to get involved, call 1-800-AHA-USA1, visit heart.org or call any of our offices around the country. Follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

About The Joint Commission
Founded in 1951, The Joint Commission seeks to continuously improve health care for the public, in collaboration with other stakeholders, by evaluating health care organizations and inspiring them to excel in providing safe and effective care of the highest quality and value. The Joint Commission accredits and certifies more than 21,000 health care organizations and programs in the United States. An independent, nonprofit organization, The Joint Commission is the nation's oldest and largest standards-setting and accrediting body in health care. www.jointcommission.org.