

The REACH Connection

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REACH

**Remote Evaluation
for Acute Ischemic
Stroke (REACH)**

REACH Mission:

To improve the care of stroke patients within smaller communities in Georgia.

Keeping You Posted . . .

REACH Expands...

The Georgia REACH network is expanding. Burke Medical Center in Waynesboro, Georgia will be coming on-line in the next few months bringing the total number of hospitals in the REACH network to 12!

Telestroke: What's Next? From tPA to Clinical Trials . . .

REACH was launched in 2003. The impetus for REACH was to provide residents of rural Georgia with state of the art stroke therapy; in particular, to deliver the one established effective therapy for acute ischemic stroke, intravenous (IV) t-PA, to acute stroke patients who otherwise would likely not receive treatment. It was recognized that little to no IV tPA was being used in rural emergency departments for acute stroke treatment principally because a lack of neurologic expertise in these communities. In addition, the delays inherent in transferring patients from hospitals in rural Georgia located from 30 to over 100 miles from MCG and the relatively narrow three hour window for administration, postponed or completely prevented treatment. Now more that six years since its inception, we have confirmed the safety, feasibility and efficiency of delivering IV t-PA remotely to acute stroke patients. A total of 165 patients have been treated, with a low 4% rate of symptomatic hemorrhagic conversion, and more than 40% treated less than 2 hours after symptom onset increasing the likelihood of favorable outcome. In addition, telestroke has become routine in many parts of the United States including New York, Massachusetts, South Carolina, Florida, Utah, and Arizona among others.

However, the same barriers (namely time and distance) which traditionally prevented residents of rural communities from receiving acute stroke care have limited their participation in acute, time-sensitive, stroke trials. For example, the NINDS trials which lead to approval of IV tPA for acute stroke was conducted at eight primarily

academic hospitals. It has been speculated that exclusion of small rural and community hospitals from participating the tPA trials slowed its translation from a study drug to routine clinical care. In addition, limiting trials to large academic and tertiary centers slows enrollment, delaying trial completion and approval of new therapies. **All Americans should have access to the latest therapies, both established and prospective, regardless of geographic circumstance.**

It is our hope that REACH can be used in a similar capacity for acute stroke research as it has for acute stroke treatment. At its simplest, REACH can help identify research candidates during routine use of the system for acute stroke therapy. Potential candidates can then be rapidly transported to MCG for consent, randomization if needed, and administration of study therapy. We have already done this successfully in three acute stroke clinical trials. In fact, almost 70% of the twenty patients enrolled at MCG in our ongoing study of IV minocycline for acute ischemic stroke were initially identified at one of six different REACH sites (Washington County, Emanuel County, Wills Memorial, Elbert Memorial, Jefferson Hospital, and Cobb Memorial). However, transfer of subjects prior to enrollment still precludes other potential subjects from participation.

The next step (or leap) is to bring the consent and treatment portion of an acute stroke study to the "spoke" hospital. This will require breaking new ground and helping to establish and share research infrastructure between MCG and REACH sites, working with local pharmacy, nursing and other emergency personnel to implement research protocols.

Stay tuned for future announcements regarding the use of the REACH system for research, and please contact us if your site has interest in participating in clinical research.

MCG
Neuroscience Center

REACH Hospitals:

- Doctor's Hospital
- Emanuel Medical Center
- Elbert Memorial Hospital
- Jefferson Hospital
- Jenkins County Hospital
- McDuffie Regional Medical Center
- Morgan Memorial Hospital
- Washington County Regional Medical Center
- Wills Memorial Hospital
- Ty Cobb Memorial
- Tift Regional

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