



For providing outstanding care to patients within the community, Northeastern Health System was recently awarded the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association's Get With The Guidelines Stroke - Gold Plus Quality Achievement Award during the International Stroke Conference.

The highest level of recognition based on consistent quality measure compliance, performance improvement and excellent patient outcomes, the award recognizes the hospital's commitment to ensuring stroke patients receive the most appropriate treatment.

"Stroke certification is an arduous process," said Jim Berry, NHS CEO. "Jennifer Russell, the hospital staff and leadership have invested significant blood, sweat and tears into changing and measuring stroke care beginning in the Emergency Department and throughout the patients' recovery. Tahlequah is a safer community because of their efforts. The award validates this fact."

Since 2020, NHS has provided neurology services through a partnership with NeuroX. Launched by American Telephysicians, NeuroX offers direct-to-patient services and specialty care support by providing online consultations with Neurologists, Psychologists and Psychiatrists, using its own telemedicine EMR platform, SmartClinix. The clinic focuses on specialty care for diseases such as epilepsy, migraine, autism and dementia.

"Stroke Certification through DNV (Det Norske Veritas) Healthcare (an authorized Medicare survey company) allows our organization to establish a consistent approach to standards of care, while reducing the variation in the care we provide and therefore decreasing the risk of error," said Jennifer Russell, RN, NHS senior director of critical care and stroke services. "We are demonstrating a higher standard of clinical services to our community by focusing on stroke care, which strengthens our community members' confidence in the quality of care that we are providing."

NHS proudly serves and treats patients from the moment they enter the emergency department, throughout their inpatient stay and during follow-up appointments within the on-site NeuroX clinic.

Russell, who has been involved in the care of stroke patients for nearly 15 years, said that achievement measures are met by extensive and stringent review of order sets, policies, procedures and patient records from the stroke team, including bedside staff, hospitalists, ancillary staff, NeuroX and stroke coordinators.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 795,000 people have a stroke annually within the United States, with 76 percent occurring unprecedented. Approximately 87 percent are ischemic strokes, which occurs when the blood supply to part of the brain is interrupted or reduced.

Strokes can occur at any age. In Oklahoma, the latest data shows that 62.2 percent per 100 patients will have a stroke, according to the National Vital Statistics System. Common medical conditions that may increase your risk of having a stroke include high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease, diabetes, obesity and sickle cell disease. There are also certain modifiable factors that may increase the chance of having a stroke such as tobacco use, poor diet choices, physical inactivity and increased salt intake.

It is important to recognize when you or your loved ones may be having a stroke by knowing the warning signs as described by the American Heart Association and American Stroke Association's B.E.F.A.S.T. acronym.

- B – Balance: Watch for sudden loss of balance or dizziness
- E – Eyes: Check for vision loss or sudden vision changes
- F – Face: Look for an uneven smile or severe headache
- A- Arm: Check if one arm is weak or numb
- S – Speech: Listen for slurred speech or confusion
- T- Time: Call 911 immediately

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