



An evaluation of PinnacleHealth's stroke program by The Joint Commission resulted in certification as an advanced primary stroke center. The certification verifies that national standards and guidelines are followed to significantly improve outcomes for stroke patients.

On average, PinnacleHealth admits 100 stroke patients each month and annually treats more stroke patients than all other local hospitals.

Stroke by the Numbers

- Stroke is the third leading cause of death in the United States. More than 143,579 people die each year from stroke in the United States.
- Every 45 seconds someone has a stroke in the United States.
- Stroke is the leading cause of serious, long-term disability in the United States.
- Each year, about 795,000 people suffer a stroke. About 600,000 of these are first attacks, and 185,000 are recurrent attacks.
- Nearly three-quarters of all strokes occur in people over the age of 65. The risk of having a stroke more than doubles each decade after the age of 55.
- Strokes can—and do—occur at ANY age. Nearly one quarter of strokes occur in people under the age of 65.

Community Education Key to Early Treatment of Stroke

Community outreach is one of many steps PinnacleHealth takes to give stroke patients an advantage. Protocols for immediate evaluation and imaging in the Emergency Department, right down to a support group for stroke survivors, provide the essential tools for treatment and recovery.

A stroke occurs when a blood vessel to the brain is either blocked (an ischemic stroke) or bursts (a hemorrhagic stroke). A clot-busting treatment, t-PA, if appropriate for the patient, must be administered within three hours of a stroke's onset, so rapid identification and transport of a stroke patient are critical to preventing disability or death.

“If people in the community know the signs and symptoms of a stroke they will be more likely to get treatment during those first critical hours,” says Kim Suda, BS, RN, CNRN, EMT, stroke coordinator at PinnacleHealth.

Suda and an entourage of helpers from PinnacleHealth's Learning Institute, Emergency Department, the Stroke Unit and Speech Therapy take life-saving messages about the signs and symptoms of a stroke and what to do when one occurs to health fairs, National Night Out and other community events throughout the year. They also present educational programs and offer stroke screenings to businesses in the region with the goal of helping participants identify risks to prevent a stroke or quickly recognize stroke symptoms.