



## Level One Cardiac Care will save lives

**(Feb. 2007)** The cardiac specialists at Sacred Heart Medical Center in Spokane want Lincoln County residents experiencing chest pain to know one very important thing – go to Lincoln Hospital FIRST!

As part of a revolutionary new partnership between these two hospitals, the new Level One Cardiac Care protocol is a big step forward in patient care.

“This is an exciting new concept,” says Dr. Ralph Monteagudo, Lincoln Hospital Chief of Staff. “We are doctors in two separate facilities dedicating ourselves to networking to make the best plan for patients experiencing a heart attack. They want us to help people understand that driving 35-70 minutes to Spokane with chest pain is dangerous at best. They should come to Lincoln Hospital first for stabilization and diagnosis.”

The reasoning behind this? Speed.

“In a cardiac emergency, time is a deadly foe. Because we live in a rural area, the clock is already against us,” says Lincoln Hospital Administrator Tom Martin. “With the new Level One protocol, we’re focused on fast diagnosis and stabilization. Lincoln Hospital’s goal is to have a diagnostic EKG done within 10 minutes of arrival and stabilizing medications started as soon as possible.”

If the EKG shows a blockage, doctors get directly on the phone and call in the Cardiac Catheter Lab team at Sacred Heart.

“While the patient is being transported either by MedStar or ambulance, the doctors at the cath lab are assembling, reading the EKG and getting the lab ready for immediate treatment upon arrival,” says Dr. Monte. “You arrive at Sacred Heart and bam! – you’re getting the treatment you need. No waiting for medications to take effect. No paperwork to fill out.”

The goal of both facilities is to have patients in the cath lab within 90 minutes of arrival at Lincoln Hospital.

“Sacred Heart is making us a priority. Their cardiac team knows they need our help to save patients. We don’t have a cardiac catheterization lab so we need them,” says Dr. Monte. “The bottom line is this – this partnership is a state-of-the-art option that will improve patient outcomes and save lives.”

The idea of Level One Cardiac Care may be new to this area, but it has been saving lives in rural Minnesota for several years. Medical teams from Lincoln Hospital and Sacred Heart traveled there last spring to see the program in action. They were so impressed that Level One was implemented here.

“In the past, rural physicians with a cardiac patient needing transport and treatment at a larger hospital were faced with a quagmire of paperwork and phone calls to find a hospital and a cardiologist, then check with insurance agencies and comply with government red tape,” says Dr. Monte. “We’ve said a resounding, ‘No,’ to that system. We’ve gone doctor to doctor saying we’re going to get this done and save lives. No more struggling to transport patients because of red tape.”

On an average week, Dr. Monte says the Lincoln ER sees between three and five patients in the ER with chest pain. Not all need transport because of a clot, but having Level One Cardiac Care available is a huge positive. “This is a program we need here. Our patients need it.”

It also helps to know that Lincoln Hospital has a state-of-the-art Bi-Phasic Defibrillator in the ER in case the patient goes into full arrest. “And our new Tele-ER service is also a bonus. If there is an issue, we can get a specialist on the screen so they can see the patient and we can be in agreement on the plan of action,” says Dr. Monte.

“This is a quality issue,” says Martin. We want to put the most advanced procedures and protocols in place to give our community the highest standard of care. This Level One Cardiac Care partnership has been a very positive experience for everyone involved and we know that lives will be saved.”

To find out more about Level One Cardiac Care, log on to [www.lincolnhospital.org](http://www.lincolnhospital.org) or pick up a brochure at the hospital or any of the three North Basin Medical Clinics.