

UPMC Passavant Emergency Departments Provide Quality Care Close to Home



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In an emergency, time is of the essence, which is why it's so important to have access to quality medical care close to home. Those living in areas north of Pittsburgh are especially fortunate in that there are two emergency departments available within a short distance: UPMC Passavant–McCandless and UPMC Passavant–Cranberry.

In addition to having excellent clinical capabilities and state-of-the-art technologies, UPMC Passavant also has experienced, board-certified emergency medicine physicians that work at both locations. And because UPMC Passavant is part of the UPMC health system, its physicians have access to the expertise of specialists in numerous areas, including stroke neurologists through its Stroke Telemedicine Program.

"People don't realize what fantastic capabilities we have here for a community hospital," says Jonathan Landis, MD, FACEP, vice chairman, Department of Emergency Medicine, UPMC Passavant–McCandless. "We have a certified 24-hour cath lab to handle cardiac emergencies, and a telemedicine program for stroke. We are also able to treat a wide variety of general medical cases, ranging from appendicitis to heart attacks to falls and broken bones—the types of things you expect to see in a suburban community.

"When my friends, neighbors, church community or Scouting community call me asking for a hospital recommendation, I direct them to our department with no reservations whatsoever," he adds. "We are able to treat any emergency. And if the problem needs a higher level of care, such as major trauma, we would transport the patient immediately to one of UPMC's two Level I trauma centers."



MINUTES COUNT WHEN DEALING WITH STROKE

When Kim West, 44, had a stroke this past November, she was fortunate that the type of medical expertise she needed was close-at-hand. "I was at work, and I began losing feeling in my right hand; it was going numb. I also began slurring my words, and couldn't remember the kids' names," explains Ms. West, who is a teacher in the Butler Area School District.

Ms. West's coworkers realized that something wasn't right, and her sister and husband were contacted to take her to the hospital. "We went to UPMC Passavant in McCandless, and I got straight in," says Ms. West, who lives in Gibsonia. "I was telling them I was fine, but when they did a CT scan, it showed immediately that I had a stroke. I couldn't believe it—I didn't think that something like that could happen to me."

Ms. West was admitted to the hospital to undergo treatment, and an MRI was taken to try to pinpoint the reason for the stroke. "I spent eight days in the hospital, and the doctors discovered that I had a tear in my carotid artery; it was just a fluke thing," she says. "I'm on

Coumadin® now and have bloodwork done every week while the artery works to repair itself, but everything is fine—I'm back to teaching my kids."

According to Christopher DeLuca, MD, FACEP, chairman, Department of Emergency Medicine at UPMC Passavant, UPMC Passavant is able to provide patients with a superior level of stroke care as a Primary Stroke Center. "Being certified as a Primary Stroke Center by The Joint Commission means that the hospital has met their quality metrics," he explains. "UPMC Passavant was first certified two years ago, and was reaccredited this past summer."

In order to become accredited as a Primary Stroke Center, a hospital must have an acute stroke team available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, that includes physicians and nurses experienced in diagnosing and treating cerebrovascular disease. It must also have written protocols to streamline and accelerate the diagnosis and treatment of stroke patients; coordinate emergency medical service personnel with emergency department staff; provide a designated stroke unit and inpatient rehabilitation services for physical, occupational, and speech therapies; and participate in a national stroke quality improvement program. UPMC Passavant also provides continuing stroke education and patient and family education on stroke recovery.

"One of the most important aspects of our stroke program is the Stroke Telemedicine Program, which provides emergency room physicians at both UPMC Passavant campuses with immediate, 24-hour access to the experts at the UPMC Stroke Institute in Oakland through state-of-the-art videoconferencing technology," explains Dr. DeLuca. "UPMC Presbyterian physicians are able to



review scans and interview the patient over a camera specifically dedicated to that purpose, which gives us an extra level of expertise when determining, for example, if a stroke patient who does not qualify for clot-busting medication may be eligible for other procedures.”

Another key component of the stroke program is UPMC Passavant’s coordination with emergency medical services personnel. “While the general population may not be aware that we have all of these capabilities, local EMS companies know, which is why they bring possible stroke patients here,” says Dr. DeLuca. “The sooner a stroke victim is evaluated and treated, the better chance of a good outcome, which is why this partnership is so important.” UPMC Passavant provides medical command to seven EMS services in the area, including Cranberry Township EMS; Harmony EMS; McCandless Franklin Park Ambulance Authority; Quality EMS; Richland EMS; Ross West View EMS; and Shaler Area EMS.

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FASTER TURNAROUND MEANS MORE SATISFIED PATIENTS

While it is certainly a priority to treat cardiac and stroke patients quickly, the fact is, UPMC Passavant Emergency Department staff focus on getting everyone seen in a timely yet accurate manner, which is one reason why the hospitals continue to excel when it comes to patient satisfaction scores.

“UPMC Passavant–McCandless and UPMC Passavant–Cranberry both have very high patient satisfaction scores within their Emergency Departments,” says Dr. Landis of the hospital’s Press

Ganey scores. “I credit this to our focus on throughput—how long it takes to get patients either admitted or out the door, given that we will never sacrifice quality medical care for speed.

“Most people don’t want to wait for care, but they expect to when they come to the emergency room,” he adds. “Typically in years past, a patient would arrive, meet the registration person, show their insurance, get their name put into the system and then go sit in the waiting room. The triage nurse would take them to another room, get vital signs and a medical history, and then they’d go back to the waiting room for an undetermined amount of time. Then they would be put into another room, wait again, and maybe see a physician.”

To avoid this kind of delay, UPMC Passavant uses a horizontal, instead of a vertical, process. A patient is taken directly to a room after sign in, where a triage nurse does a quick assessment. Registration information is taken and then the patient is taken directly to a treatment room. In the treatment

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room, registration is completed, and the primary nurse and physician see the patient, quite often all at the same time. "This way, a patient need only tell their story once; that was another source of patient dissatisfaction—having to tell the same story over and over again," says Dr. Landis.

As a result of this horizontal process, patients at UPMC Passavant–McCandless are generally seen by a physician in a median time of 12 to 14 minutes, which is a far cry from the hours that most patients expect to wait. "Our average door-to-admission time is 210 minutes if the patient needs to stay; the door-to-discharge time is around two hours for those patients who are able to go home, which is very good throughput," says Dr. Landis. "We review these numbers on a daily basis to see where we can improve."

"One of our goals at UPMC Passavant–Cranberry is to keep our waiting room empty," adds Raymond Viducich, MD, vice chairman, Department of Emergency Medicine, UPMC Passavant–



Cranberry. "We work to get patients in a room within five minutes and seen by a physician within 30 minutes. The majority of our patients are actually seen in 15 minutes or less."

According to Dr. Viducich, the UPMC Passavant–Cranberry Emergency Department is relatively small, but extremely high-functioning. "We have a 16-bed department and a five-bed fast track that is run primarily by a

nurse practitioner or physician assistant working in conjunction with our board-certified emergency physicians," he explains. "The fast track is open from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. every day, which enables patients to come in and get great care quickly so they can go about their days."

The fast track is designed for patients with minor care needs, such as sprained ankles, sore throats and flu-like symptoms. Most fast track patients are discharged within 90 minutes. "If a patient is identified as needing a higher level of care, for example, if someone comes in with what they think is a stomach virus, but are evaluated and determined to have appendicitis, we can move them to one of the main ER beds very easily and have a physician assume their care," says Dr. Viducich. "We also have protocols in place to treat strokes and heart attacks, including the Stroke Telemedicine Program. And if necessary, we can transport the patient to the UPMC Passavant–McCandless campus very quickly, which is only 10 miles away.

"We are really focused on customer satisfaction—on providing excellent clinical care in a very friendly and welcoming atmosphere," adds Dr. Viducich. "This extends from our physicians to our nurses to the rest of the Emergency Department staff." ■

FOR MORE INFORMATION on emergency services at UPMC Passavant, visit UPMCPassavant.com.

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Neighbors Helping Neighbors

For many of the physicians at UPMC Passavant, it's not just about treating patients, but friends. After working at other health systems throughout his career, Dr. Landis chose to join UPMC Passavant in 2013. "I hadn't been practicing in my own community for a number of years, and I find it very refreshing to be here now," explains the Gibsonia resident. "My three children attend the Pine-Richland School District, and my wife and I are active band parents. We are also involved in our community and Orchard Hill Church. This hospital has always been in my backyard; my kids went there when they were little for cuts and broken bones. It was a good fit for me; a great move."

Dr. Viducich, who attended medical school at the University of Pittsburgh and performed his residency in Ohio, moved back to Pittsburgh to join UPMC Passavant. "After my residency training, my wife Debbie and I considered many different places to live and work. Ultimately, we decided that we wanted to move back to Pittsburgh," says the doctor, who is originally from New York City. "Pittsburgh is a great town and we especially love living in the North Hills. My two daughters attended Saint Alexis Catholic School and then went on to Vincentian Academy. My wife and I are very active in our school and church communities. We are also active volunteers at Animal Friends. I like feeling that my family is making a positive impact on our community." ■