

Subject: "Code Heart" Program Moves Some Heart Attack Patients Quickly Into Cardiac Cath Lab

Date: 11/10/04

For Release: Immediately

It begins with Mecklenburg County's MEDIC personnel who have been trained to place and to read complicated 12-lead electrocardiograms on patients whom they suspect to be having a heart attack. The readout on the EKG is quickly radioed from the ambulance to a physician in Carolinas Medical Center's emergency department.

If the EKG shows specific changes in certain electrical impulses (ST segments) within the heart, the emergency physician activates a "Code Heart" response from a variety of clinical specialists who are ready when the ambulance arrives with the patient. Among those responding are the emergency medicine specialist, nurses, a radiology technologist, a respiratory care technologist, and a cardiologist. A carefully choreographed series of tests and evaluations are quickly run and if the patient is confirmed as having a heart attack with elevated S-T segments, he or she is moved immediately to the cardiac catheterization lab.

In the cath lab, the cardiologist and team of technologists first open the coronary artery that is obstructed, then place a stent (a tiny wire scaffold coated with special medication to keep the artery open) in the area where the obstruction occurred. The patient achieves great relief from pain and this rapid reopening of the artery saves heart muscle that might otherwise die from lack of oxygenated blood flow.

**-more-**

The patient moves finally to the Dickson Heart Unit where nurses closely monitor recovery and watch for complications.

The goal of CMC's Code Heart program is to provide these heart attack patients relief with a fully opened coronary artery as rapidly as possible. The goal is to do so within 90 minutes of first contact with the healthcare team.

Carolinas Medical Center is an Academic Medical Center Teaching Hospital and the flagship facility of Carolinas HealthCare System (CHS). Carolinas HealthCare is a not-for-profit, self-supporting public organization offering a wide variety of health and human services to residents of both North and South Carolina.

CHS is the largest healthcare system in the Carolinas, and fourth largest public system in the nation. It owns, leases and manages hospitals, nursing homes, physician practices, home health agencies, radiation therapy facilities, physical therapy facilities, and other healthcare related operations, comprising approximately 4,300 licensed beds and 25,300 employees.

**For more information, contact Scott White or Nancy Ryan  
Public Information, 704-355-3141**