

Melrose-Wakefield Hospital: State-of-the-art heart service

Hear attack victims on the North Shore have a new, local option for state-of-the-art emergency treatment.

With \$1 million in recent improvements, Melrose-Wakefield Hospital has enhanced its cardiac care services by offering new emergency angioplasty. According to studies, the procedure can reduce heart damage and save lives when performed within two hours of a heart attack.

"The hospital has stepped up and said, 'we're going to do what's best for our patients,'" said Dr. Carl J. Turissini, the director of interventional cardiology. "The hospital's really made a substantial commitment."

The four doctors on the hospital's angioplasty team have more than 30 years of experience with the procedure but previously could only perform it in Boston hospitals. Now they bring their experience to Melrose-Wakefield, one of only two North Shore hospitals to offer the procedure.

While a heart attack victim previously had to endure a three-hour delay before receiving an emergency angioplasty in Boston, Melrose-Wakefield staff can complete the procedure in under 90 minutes, Turissini said.

"When the arteries close, time is of the essence," he said. "The longer the artery's closed, the higher the mortality risk."

Emergency medical crews responding to 911 calls can



COURTESY PHOTO

Cardiologist Carl Turissini, MD, FACC, director of interventional cardiology at Melrose-Wakefield Hospital (MWH), performs a procedure with the new, state-of-the-art cardiac catheterization equipment. This newly installed equipment also allows the doctors to perform cardiac angioplasty at MWH, the first hospital in the surrounding 16 cities in towns to get approval to perform angioplasty.

sometimes determine if the procedure is appropriate for a patient. In those cases they can notify Melrose-Wakefield staff, who will be ready to operate before the patient's ambulance even arrives at the hospital. This communication reduces the amount of time between a heart attack and life-saving treatment.

Here is how the procedure works:

A heart attack occurs when an artery leaving the heart becomes blocked, preventing blood from flowing through the body and damaging heart tissue. The emergency angioplasty team uses a catheter in the upper leg to locate the blockage, inserts another catheter attached to a balloon and guides it to the blockage. A doctor then inflates the balloon, which allows blood to flow through the artery again, and inserts a metal stent to keep the artery open.

"We're going to be opening people's arteries as a

way to abort the heart attack," Turissini said.

The state Department of Public Health cleared Melrose-Wakefield to perform emergency angioplasty in late January. The hospital spent \$1 million to renovate its cardiac catheterization laboratory, invest in new equipment and train its nurses and technicians to meet the state's standards. The upgrade included purchasing state-of-the-art digital imaging equipment and intensive staff training through Massachusetts General Hospital.

For people who suffer acute heart attacks, emergency angioplasty is a more effective treatment than traditional clot-dissolving medicines because it reduces a victim's recovery time and does a better job at clearing a blocked artery, Turissini said. Oftentimes, people who take clot-dissolving medicines have to return to the hospital and undergo elective

angioplasty, he said.

For now Melrose-Wakefield offers the procedure during limited daytime hours, but the hospital will begin to offer it around the clock beginning May 1.

"The main thing is Melrose-Wakefield can now offer people the best care for a heart attack right in their own community rather than having to ship them into [Boston]," Turissini said.

Along with Turissini, three other doctors also perform the procedure at Melrose-Wakefield: Laurence Conway, the director of cardiac performance improvement, David Criss and Khether Raby. The emergency angioplasty laboratory staff also includes six nurses and four technologists. The hospital has performed cardiac catheterizations since 1992.

Melrose-Wakefield is part of the Hallmark Health system, a community-based non-profit organization that serves Boston's northern suburbs, including Melrose, Wakefield, Saugus, Malden and Reading. The system also includes Lawrence Memorial Hospital in Medford, the Malden Medical Center and the Malden Family Health Center. Melrose-Wakefield also has a partnership with Mass. General for cardiac patients who need further treatment, such as open-heart surgery.

Melrose-Wakefield Hospital is located at 585 Lebanon Street in Melrose.