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### **Cass Regional First Area Site to Use Telemedicine Robot**

Harrisonville, Mo. - Cass Regional Medical Center is the first hospital in the Kansas City area to take part in a new program in which a "robot" is used in the time-critical diagnosis and treatment of stroke patients.

On December 13, representatives from Research Medical Center's TeleStroke Program and Harrisonville EMS took part in a mock stroke code at Cass Regional's emergency department. Utilizing the new RP-Lite® telemedicine robot, Cass Regional's emergency nurses and physician were able to confer with Shannon Kohake, MD, who specializes in neurology at Research Medical Center in Kansas City, Mo. Through an Internet connection, Dr. Kohake was able to remotely access the robot to view and speak with the mock patient and the emergency staff at the bedside. The versatile system, which includes a video monitor, camera, stethoscope and handset, allowed Dr. Kohake to pan and zoom the camera to view the patient closely, and to visualize data on the in-room vital sign monitors. Following initial testing at Cass Regional and the remote exam by Dr. Kohake, it was determined that the mock patient needed to be transferred to Research Medical Center for further treatment. Harrisonville EMS then transferred the mock patient to Research Medical Center, where caregivers there were able to practice protocols for receiving patients who had already been examined remotely by one of their neurologists.

Paula McBride, RN, an emergency nurse at Cass Regional, explained the advantages of the new system from the caregivers' perspective. "Our goal with any suspected stroke patient is to see, evaluate, treat, and if necessary, transfer for further care within a 60-minute window," said McBride. "Before the telemedicine robot, we would only be able to confer with the neurologist by phone, which gives that doctor limited information with which to work," she related. "Having the neurologist perform their own examination prior to transfer accelerates the care process so the doctor has a better idea of what they're dealing with prior to receiving the patient at their location," said McBride.

Jennifer Parreira, RN, MSN, FNP-BC, stroke program coordinator at Research Medical Center, echoes McBride's comments. "Many times when we receive a suspected stroke patient, we don't know exactly what to expect until we are able to examine the patient," she said. "The telemedicine robot allows us to gather a more complete picture so we can put a plan of care into place more quickly," Parreira continued.

The telemedicine system represents an annual investment of over \$27,000 for Cass Regional. Nearly \$12,000 of the initial startup costs were funded by Cass Regional Medical Center Foundation, a 501(c)(3) charity that raises funds to advance care and services at the medical center. A special fund raising event was held by the Foundation last year to help cover the cost of acquiring the telemedicine equipment.

The use of the telemedicine robot in stroke care is the first of many planned applications for the equipment. "Our first priority for implementing the robot will be in cases where an evaluation and diagnosis is time-critical, such as stroke, heart attack and trauma," said Chris Lang, Cass Regional's CEO. "Future uses may include remote psychiatric evaluations, clinic visits, and specialist consultation for hospitalized patients," Lang said.

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