



**Briefs**

**Regional News from HASC**

## Groundbreaking Trial Study for Pre-Hospital Stroke Therapy to Take Place in Los Angeles County

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has awarded a \$16 million grant to a multi-faceted consortium of hospitals from throughout Los Angeles County to perform a pivotal trial of a new pre-hospital therapy for acute stroke. HASC and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) are members of the project's steering committee.

Stroke is the third leading cause of death and the leading cause of adult disability in the United States. Each year, more than 750,000 Americans suffer a symptomatic stroke. The clot-busting drug that activates tissue plasminogens is the only approved treatment for acute ischemic stroke, but only 1 to 3 percent of patients receive clot-dissolving therapy. NIH recognizes that paramedic initiation of brain protective drugs like magnesium sulfate in the field is a highly promising strategy to bring brain-saving treatment to more stroke patients.

The study, titled *Field*

*Administration of Stroke Therapy-Magnesium (FAST-MAG)*, will be the first-ever clinical trial of this approach and will place Los Angeles County hospitals at the forefront of stroke care internationally.

The trial will examine if magnesium sulfate can protect the threatened areas of the brain when administered to stroke victims by paramedics within the first two hours of stroke onset.

An initial pilot study, conducted from May 2000 to January 2002, showed promising results—paramedics in the field initiated the drug more quickly compared to the usual approach of waiting until the patient was in the hospital, and patients showed a tendency to better recovery.

The study will take place over the next four years and is designed to employ the entire Los Angeles County Emergency Medical Services system, including paramedics from up to 30 provider agencies and all paramedic receiving hospitals.

All emergency medicine department physician medical directors, all neurologists and all neurosurgeons in the County are being invited to join the trial as site investigators. A core group of 20 full-time study nurse research coordinators will be available to provide paramedic and nursing education and to assist participating hospitals with study implementation. UCLA Medical Center will serve as the clinical coordinating center for the project, with the data management center coordinated through Stanford University.

Eighteen research nurses, who are part of the study team, have begun the process of contacting the 80 eligible hospitals regarding the study. The FAST-MAG Overall Study Research nurse coordinator, Gigi Gaughran, RN, can be contacted at (310) 825-1806, [Ggaughran@mednet.ucla.edu](mailto:Ggaughran@mednet.ucla.edu).

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### ~~LA Hospital CEOs, Toronto Officials To Discuss SARS Preparedness Nov. 24~~

~~In an effort to improve preparedness for SARS and/or other highly infectious diseases, HASC and the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health have called a meeting with Los Angeles County area hospital CEOs/administrators and a Toronto area hospital executive and other representatives from the Toronto Public Health Department.~~

~~The Toronto delegation will share its firsthand account of the lessons learned from the SARS epidemic that impacted~~

~~the Toronto area.~~

~~The meeting is scheduled for Monday, Nov. 24, 9:30 a.m. to 12 p.m., at the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, 350 South Bixel Street, Los Angeles. Space is limited.~~

~~Please call Cheryl Clifford at (213) 538-0703 or e-mail [cclifford@hasc.org](mailto:cclifford@hasc.org) for more information.~~

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### ~~Inland Hospitals Prepare for Nurse Staffing Ratios~~

~~In preparation of the upcoming implementation of nurse staffing ratios on Jan. 1, 2004, the HASC Inland office is collecting data from hospitals in Riverside and San Bernardino counties to assist HASC and its members in lobbying and education efforts with County Supervisors and state legislators before and after implementation of these regulations.~~

~~This advocacy effort will enable HASC and its members to discuss the~~

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