

# Joining the fight against strokes

Paramedics will administer drug to patients before they get to the hospital.

**Jackson Bell**  
News-Press and Leader

GLENDALE — When rescuing stroke victims, Glendale Fire paramedics will soon be equipped with a critical new tool to minimize brain damage.

The Fire Department is participating in a countywide clinical trial that will allow paramedics to administer magnesium sulfate to stroke victims before they get to the hospital. The treatment, called the Field Administration of Stroke Therapy — Magnesium Phase 3 Clinical Trial, is expected to begin by late spring.

Magnesium sulfate, if used early enough, can limit the amount of brain damage caused by strokes by dilating blood vessels and increasing blood flow to the brain, officials said. It also blocks calcium buildup in the brain that is caused by a reduction in blood flow.

But the drug has to be administered no later than two hours after a stroke occurs for it to be effective, said Capt. Scott Mohlenbork, the Glendale Fire's Emergency Medical Services coordinator.

"This gives us the chance to best facilitate the needs of our citizens, our patients," Mohlenbork said.

The \$16-million clinical trial, the first of its kind in the world, is funded by the National Institute of Health, according to Dr. Jeffrey Saver, the principal investigator of the trial and a professor of neurology at UCLA.

This "pioneering" trial will have paramedics administering a field dose of four grams in the first 15 minutes and then hospital workers will

'Everyone in the world is looking at Glendale . . . to see if this new approach will help solve this disease.'

**Dr. Jeffrey Saver**  
Neurology professor at UCLA

give 16 grams during the next 24 hours, Saver said.

"We have increasingly recognized in strokes that time lost is brain loss," he said. "The golden window [for the drug] is in the first few hours."

So far, 27, emergency-medical-service organizations and 38 hospitals — including Glendale Adventist Medical Center, Glendale Memorial Hospital & Health Center and Verdugo Hills Hospital — have signed on for the trial, which will last about four years. Officials hope to have 80 hospitals in Los Angeles County working on the trail.

"We're participating because it's important to study this, and to mobilize L.A. County hospitals like this will be a powerhouse of research," said Dr. Sheryl Lee, Glendale Adventist's principal investigator of the trial.

Before paramedics or hospital workers will be able to use the drug, patients or their legal representatives must give their consent.

If they agree, the patients will be put in touch by cell-phones with doctors who will explain the study.

Stroke is the leading cause of adult disability in the United States, and the third-leading cause of death, according to the clinical trial's website, <http://www.fast-mag.info>.

"Everyone in the world is looking at Glendale and Los Angeles County to see if this new approach will help solve this disease," Saver said.