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Local hospital participating in federally-funded stroke trial involving magnesium sulfate

The Centinela Freeman HealthSystem's Marina Campus on Lincoln Boulevard in the Marina del Rey area and Memorial Campus in Inglewood are participating in a stroke trial funded by the National Institutes of Health.

The Field Administration of Stroke Therapy-Magnesium (FAST-MAG) Trial will examine whether magnesium sulfate can protect a person's brain when given to stroke victims by paramedics within the first two hours of stroke onset.

Researchers said magnesium sulfate works by dilating brain blood vessels and by preventing buildup of calcium in injured nerve cells.

Robert Slay, director of the Marina Campus emergency department, will be the principal research investigator at Marina Campus.

Jeffrey Saver, director of the UCLA Stroke Neurology Program, is the lead principal investigator for the trial, which will be conducted at 80 hospitals in Los Angeles County.

"By having paramedics start a brain-protecting agent for the first time ever in a large trial, the FAST-MAG investigators are seeking to create a new, more successful era in stroke therapy," Saver said.

The trial is supported by a \$16 million federal grant and includes 1,298 stroke patients who will receive magnesium sulfate or a placebo at random.

Paramedics will administer magnesium sulfate to patients who are being transported to a hospital participating in the trial.

In a separate pilot study conducted between May 2000 and January 2002, paramedics gave magnesium sulfate to stroke victims more quickly instead of waiting for the patient to arrive at a hospital.

Researchers said these patients in the pilot study had a tendency for better recovery from stroke.