
People With Cardiac Arrest Less Likely To Survive If Admitted On Weekend, Study Shows

For the study, researchers analyzed the Nationwide Inpatient Sample, a national database of 20 percent of all hospital admissions for cardiac arrest to U.S. hospitals from 1990 to 2004. The analysis included 67,554 admissions. Cardiac arrest is when the heart slows or stops working. Brain death can occur in just four to six minutes after cardiac arrest.

The study found people admitted to the hospital on a weekend after an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest were 13.4 percent more likely to die than those people admitted on a weekday. The result remained the same after controlling for hospital size, teaching status, rural hospital compared to urban hospital, region, age, gender and other illnesses.

"A higher death rate among patients admitted on weekends may be due to lack of resources for treating cardiac arrest," said study author Richard M. Dubinsky, MD, MPH, with the University of Kansas Medical Center in Kansas City, and Fellow of the American Academy of Neurology. "It's probable that improved resuscitation efforts in the emergency department and outside of hospitals, such as automatic defibrillators, allow more patients to survive until hospital admission, explaining the increased risk of death from 2000-2004 compared to 1990-1999."

The study also found men were less likely to die after being admitted to the hospital for cardiac arrest than women, and cardiac arrest patients are getting younger. "The average age of a patient admitted to the hospital for cardiac arrest in the early 1990s was 68. The average age dropped to 66.5 years old ten years later," said Dubinsky.

Dubinsky says hospitals need to make more resources available on weekends to improve the likelihood people with cardiac arrest who are admitted on the weekend will survive.

This research was presented at the American Academy of Neurology 60th Anniversary Annual Meeting in Chicago, April 16, 2008.

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