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**EXCELA HEALTH'S STROKE CARE SURPASSES GOLD STANDARD  
TO CLAIM HIGHEST PERFORMANCE ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**

**GREENSBURG, PA, April 19, 2010 ... Dream It. Achieve It. Sustain It.**

For nearly three years, Excelsa Health has been dreaming of gold. Committing to the American Heart/Stroke Association's Get With The Guidelines® program to achieve defect free stroke care, Excelsa's neuroscience coordinators began tracking adherence to these protocols and celebrating the benchmarks each of the hospitals attained along the way. This vigilance has paid off, demonstrating sustainability, not just over 90 days or a year, but a 24-month period or longer to claim the Stroke Gold Plus Performance Achievement Award.

Steve Dentel, RN, BSN, director of Quality Improvement, for the AHA/ASA, noted Excelsa's stellar performance when he presented the framed certificates for each hospital.

"This is the first time we have recognized three hospitals at the same time," he said. "Some hospitals achieve the core measures for some period of time, but in this case, Excelsa has made a longterm commitment, and it shows."

To receive the award, Excelsa Health achieved 85 percent or higher adherence to all Get With The Guidelines-Stroke Performance Achievement indicators for two or more consecutive 12-month intervals and achieved 75 percent or higher compliance with six of 10 Get With The Guidelines-Stroke Quality Measures, which are reporting initiatives to measure quality of care.

These measures include aggressive use of medications, such as tPA, antithrombotics, anticoagulation therapy, DVT prophylaxis, cholesterol reducing drugs and tobacco cessation, all aimed at reducing death and disability and improving the lives of stroke patients.

Currently, Excelsa is reporting 94.2% adherence at Westmoreland Hospital; 95.3% at Latrobe Hospital, and 100% at Frick Hospital. “What these numbers mean is more patients went home and back to their lives because of the great care received,” said Dentel. “ ‘We are what we repeatedly do, says Aristotle. ‘Excellence is not an act, it’s a habit.’ Excelsa Health has made defect free stroke care the standard. Congratulations.”

Excelsa’s achievements will be recognized at the international stroke conference, reported in the AHA’s *Stroke Journal* and be featured in *US News and World Report* in July.

With a stroke, time lost is brain lost, and the Get With The Guidelines–Stroke Gold Plus Performance Achievement Award demonstrates Excelsa’s commitment to being one of the top hospitals in the country for providing aggressive, proven stroke care.

“Excelsa Health is to be commended for its commitment to implementing standards of care and protocols for treating stroke patients,” said Lee H. Schwamm, MD, chair of the Get With The Guidelines National Steering Committee and director of the TeleStroke and Acute Stroke Services at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. “The full implementation of acute care and secondary prevention recommendations and guidelines is a critical step in saving the lives and improving outcomes of stroke patients.”

Get With The Guidelines–Stroke uses the “teachable moment,” the time soon after a patient has had a stroke, when they are most likely to listen to and follow their health care professionals’ guidance. Studies demonstrate that patients who are taught how to manage their risk factors while still in the hospital reduce their risk of a second heart attack or stroke.

According to the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association, stroke is the third leading cause of death in the United States and a leading cause of serious, long-term disability. On average, someone suffers a stroke every 45 seconds; someone dies of a stroke every three minutes; and 795,000 people suffer a new or recurrent stroke each year.

For more information on Get With The Guidelines, visit [www.americanheart.org/getwiththeguidelines](http://www.americanheart.org/getwiththeguidelines).