

Expansion of Telestroke Program connects BJC hospitals to experts 24/7

The expansion of the BJC HealthCare Telestroke Program, which began at Barnes-Jewish Hospital (BJH), was officially complete in 2023 with the addition of Barnes-Jewish West County Hospital. The Telestroke Program connects all 14 BJC hospitals to Washington University School of Medicine stroke physician specialists 24/7/365 through a virtual care platform to identify and treat acute ischemic stroke.

The need for the Telestroke program was identified when BJH became a Joint Commission-certified Comprehensive Stroke Center, which led to a 33 percent increase in stroke and cerebrovascular volumes from 2010 to 2016. In particular, BJH experienced a marked increase in low acuity Stroke and Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA) patients transferring to the hospital, exceeding the neuro bed capacity. This resulted in delays and loss of transfers for higher acuity patients who needed the specialized services offered at BJH. Neuroscience leaders at the hospital and university knew implementing virtual services could help maintain access to stroke experts while freeing up beds for those most critically in need.



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Stroke & Cerebrovascular Center Inpatient Volume



The purpose of the Telestroke Program is to:

- Expand community hospital access to stroke-trained physicians to increase level of stroke care in underserved populations in the region.
- Increase the number of acute stroke patients cared for locally and who remain in their communities.
- Increase the number of stroke patients treated with acute stroke interventions.
- Improve the timeliness of stroke interventions in BJC community hospitals.

Since 2019, almost 10,000 Telestroke consultations have been provided to community hospitals through the program. The impact to date is that 75 percent of these patients remained in their community hospital, saving those critical beds for higher acuity patients at BJH.

In 2023, there were 2,450 telestroke consultations, up 25 percent since 2022. The Telestroke network of physician experts also increased from nine to 15.

Through partnership with the Telestroke Program and the BJC System Stroke Care Clinical Program, Barnes-Jewish St. Peters Hospital successfully achieved Joint Commission certification as a Thrombectomy Capable Stroke Center. The Telestroke team was instrumental in coordinating care for 31 thrombectomy patients that helped the hospital reach this significant stroke program milestone.