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New Heart Attack Protocol Could Save Lives

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New protocol from Tri-State Ambulance and Gundersen Lutheran can significantly decrease the time between a heart attack, and the necessary treatment.

The Cardiac Alert protocol allows for paramedics in the field to inform the hospital that a patient is coming in. The Cardiac Catheterization Team will then prepare before the patient's arrival.

Usually following a heart attack, the patient is given a battery of tests before the Cath Lab Team is activated. The new protocol has the paramedics, instead of the hospitals, deciding if the lab is necessary.

By bypassing the emergency room, patients can get the treatment about 30 or 40 minutes sooner, and sometimes that can make all the difference.

"Every stop that we make along the way adds time to that process. The Heart Association says that 'time is muscle.' The more time we can save by efficiently processing a patient through the health care system to the definitive care that they need, the better that person's outcome is going to be," says Matt Zavadsky, Director of Tri-State Ambulance.

Zavadsky says the decision to activate the Cardiac Catheterization Team is a fairly easy one for paramedics to make, since the symptoms of a heart attack are usually clear.



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