

Contact: Carol Rubiano
212-580-9706

BETH ISRAEL MEDICAL CENTER OFFERS “COOL” WAY TO TREAT AND SAVE HEART ATTACK VICTIMS

February 16, 2009 -- David Swain, Sr. knows how lucky he is. A retired Sanitation Department foreman, he suffered a massive heart attack in mid-January. FDNY paramedics brought him to Beth Israel Medical Center--Kings Highway Division (KHD). He is now home recuperating from heart bypass surgery and grateful to be alive.

Mr. Swain was the first patient brought to Beth Israel who fit the criteria for a special cooling treatment following a heart attack. Effective on January 1st, the New York City Fire Department and Emergency Medical Service (EMS) implemented a policy that required EMS to bring cardiac arrest victims to the nearest hospital with an approved therapeutic hypothermia protocol, a document that details the use of cold therapy.

At Beth Israel, pulmonary intensive care specialist Hosam Sayed, MD, had led the team that developed such a protocol in collaboration with physicians, nurses and other health care professionals. “Everyone worked hard on a procedure that adheres to established standards and works best for our institution,” said Chaim Bernstein, MD, KHD Medical Director and Chief of Pulmonary and Critical Care. “The protocol clearly defines the type of heart attack patient who could benefit by the cooling method.”

“When the heart stops, oxygen supply to vital organs, particularly the brain, is cut off. Cooling the patient can help reduce the possibility of damage to the patient’s neurological function,” explained Dr. Sayed. “Without having to rely on expensive machines, we laid down a set of criteria to identify people in cardiac arrest who can benefit by a period of cooling before treatment to fix the heart can begin.”

Dr. Sayed and Intensive Care Unit (ICU) Nurse Manager Iriowen Idahosa, RN, then mobilized to educate the entire staff on the step-by-step process that takes a team of doctors, nurses, lab and EEG techs and others at least 24 hours of one-on-one caring for the patient.

Walking was a daily exercise for Mr. Swain. His only known health concern seemed to be a thyroid condition and elevated cholesterol, for which he was being treated. He usually walked around Howard Beach for almost three hours, occasionally stopping to enjoy nature along the way. To diversify his routine, he would sometimes drive and then walk, as he did that cold winter day, when he was accompanied by his son, David Jr., for a stroll in Marine Park. He had just celebrated his 67th birthday the day before. While driving home, Mr. Swain complained that he was not feeling well then suddenly slumped unconscious on the steering wheel. David Jr. struggled to steer the car toward the curb, called 911, attempted to give his unresponsive Dad chest compressions. EMS responded immediately and worked to restore Mr. Swain’s pulse and blood pressure and notified Beth Israel to expect a patient in cardiac arrest.

By the time Mr. Swain arrived in the Kings Highway Division Emergency Department (ED), CODE ICE had been called, which brought the ICU team to the ED. Dr. Sayed and Ms. Idahosa were there alongside ED physicians Tuere Franklin, MD, and Director Ramy Yakobi, MD, to make sure he met the criteria for hypothermia treatment and then to start the procedure using packets of ice, cooling blankets and cold lavage, alternately pumping and suctioning cold saline solution through a tube inserted down the nose to his stomach. “The goal was to bring down the patient’s body temperature to 33 degrees Celsius,” said ED nurse Heather Walsh, RN, who took care of Mr. Swain for four hours before he was transferred to the ICU, where Ms. Idahosa, Alicia

Acosta, RN, and other nurses kept a close eye on Mr. Swain's vital signs.

"Low temperatures can induce seizures so in addition to a nurse, an EEG technician was by his side monitoring his brain activity, and we were very careful to monitor his progress through re-warming," said Ms. Idahosa. Once Mr. Swain was stabilized and responsive, he was transferred to Beth Israel's Petrie Division for cardiac catheterization and heart bypass surgery.

"I owe my life to my son who called 911, to EMS paramedics who responded within minutes, and to Beth Israel, where I had the best team of healthcare professionals who took care of me," said Mr. Swain, who remembers everything, up until he slumped on the steering wheel. And his brain function was not impaired. His cardiologist is extremely pleased with his progress and he has started to walk again. "The doctor said I should take it easy until I have recovered completely."

"We are so gratified to see how well our cooling protocol worked on Mr. Swain," said Dr. Sayed. "The hypothermia method is literally a "cool" way to treat a patient and save a life."