

Gulf Islands Stroke-Launch FAQ

What is the Gulf Islands Stroke-Launch?

- This is an initiative aimed at quickly identifying patients suffering from a stroke and getting them to a tertiary center where they can receive the appropriate diagnostics and therapies.

How does it work?

- If a stroke is identified during call taking, a request is sent to PTCC right away to determine if an aircraft is available. If the crew arrives and confirms that the patient is FAST or FAST-VAN positive, they advise dispatch to launch the helicopter and move to meet it as soon as possible.

Is bypassing the local hospital or clinic dangerous?

- Patients must be hemodynamically stable and not requiring any sort of ABC resuscitation. A patient must be alert and able to comply with a FAST-VAN assessment. Unstable patients should be taken to the local facility.

Why can't the local clinic or hospital help?

- While the local facility provides great care for many various problems, the diagnosis and care of strokes relies on advanced imaging, starting with a regular CT scan and progressing to more complicated scans and/or MRI. Thrombolytics to treat a stroke can't be given before this is done as there is a significant risk of causing or worsening bleeding in the wrong patient.

What if a helicopter can't fly?

- If air is unavailable the dispatch will know early in the call thanks to the early notification of PTCC. In this case when a crew identifies a FAST or FAST-VAN positive patient the dispatch team can already have anticipated the need for emergent transport and started making secondary plans. If the patient is stable, they can still bypass the local facility to quickly get to Victoria General Hospital, or the closest CT capable hospital if Victoria General Hospital is prohibitively far away (i.e. Nanaimo Regional or North Island Hospital – Comox Valley).

What else can the responding crew do?

- Checking a blood glucose is imperative in all potential stroke patients. In addition, completing the tracking form helps to ensure the process is working and for adjustments to be made if necessary.