



## EVIDENCE-BASED CARE PROGRAM

### INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS AND FAMILIES ABOUT... t-PA (TISSUE PLASMINOGEN ACTIVATOR) FOR STROKE

If you or your family member has suffered a stroke within the last three hours, you may be offered a treatment called tPA or recombinant tissue plasminogen activator.

#### WHAT IS tPA?

tPA is a medication that is given by intravenous (IV). If the stroke is caused by a blood clot, tPA can break up the clot and allow the blood supply to return to the brain.

#### WHAT TESTS ARE REQUIRED?

In order to determine whether you or your family member can be offered tPA, a CAT scan (an X-Ray) of the brain will be done. This is to find out if bleeding into the brain has caused the stroke. tPA can worsen bleeding in patients whose strokes are caused by bleeding into the brain. A blood test will also be taken to check that you do not have a bleeding condition.

If the CAT scan shows no bleeding in the brain, then we can use the clot-dissolving drug, tPA, as long as certain conditions are met. The doctor will go over this with you.

#### WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF tPA?

Treatment with tPA results in 1 out of every 8 patients treated being cured. Additionally, there may be an improvement in recovery for those that are not completely cured. tPA **must** be given within three hours of the onset of the stroke to have this benefit.

#### WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF tPA?

tPA treatment has risks. There is a 6.4% chance of bleeding (hemorrhage) into the brain (because tPA thins the blood) compared to 0.6% if tPA is not given.

If bleeding into the brain happens after tPA is given, it may cause your stroke symptoms to be worse and may result in death. However, the death rate is the same with or without tPA and there is still a greater chance of recovery with tPA treatment. tPA may also cause bleeding in other areas of the body.

If you choose not to have tPA treatment, your care will not be affected. You will receive the usual treatment for stroke.

If you have any questions about tPA or other treatment for stroke, please talk to your physician or any member of your health care team.