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F.A.S.T. stroke awareness information was distributed by Washington Hospital nursing staff to approximately 600 riders at the Fremont BART station during the commute hours on May 7, National Stroke Alert Day. Washington Hospital Healthcare System worked with the County Health System's Emergency Medical Services (EMS), Fire Departments, BART, and the Pacific Stroke Association to coordinate this massive public education opportunity. Stroke awareness cards distributed to BART passengers highlights the F.A.S.T. acronym as an easy way to remember the signs of stroke and what to do:

Face: Look for an uneven smile

Arm: Check if one arm is weak

Speech: Listen for slurred speech

Time: Call 9-1-1 immediately if any one of these symptoms is present

Stroke is a leading cause of death and long-term disability nationwide. Washington Hospital is a certified Stroke Center designated by the County EMS Agency to receive 911 patients. As a certified Primary Stroke Center, Washington Hospital's Stroke Team rapidly treats stroke to reduce disability and save lives. However, one of the most important elements of treating stroke is to educate the public to recognize the signs of stroke and to call 9-1-1 immediately if any signs are present.

"Our primary goal is to treat stroke as quickly as possible once a patient reaches our Emergency Room, as time is brain and we know that the faster we revascularize the patient the better the outcome," said Ash Jain, MD Stroke Program Medical Director. "Calling 911 immediately is critical because EMS responders are trained to take people with stroke symptoms directly to the right hospital, where they can receive time-sensitive and life-saving treatment. Washington Hospital provides the most comprehensive care from the time of admission and all through follow-up care."

"Participating in National Stroke Alert Day's FAST campaign allows us to enhance our already active outreach and education program," explains Doug Van Houten, RN Stroke Program Clinical Coordinator. "Our goal is to increase our community's knowledge of stroke signs so they can quickly take action by calling 9-1-1."

Everyone can take steps to lower their risk for stroke by maintaining a healthy lifestyle and reducing their risk factors for stroke, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes and smoking.