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## Plano chosen to take part in clinical trial

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(Created: Monday, June 12, 2006 10:43 AM CDT)

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Residents are encourage to attend a public forum on Monday concerning a potentially life-saving clinical trial facilitated by the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in conjunction with the Plano Fire Department.

This study, sponsored by the National Heart, Lung, Blood Institute and a \$36 million grant is testing whether giving an intravenous solution of readily available medications (glucose, insulin and potassium), referred to as "GIK," is helpful to patients at the first signs of a heart attack.

A heart attack occurs when blood flow from the coronary arteries to the heart muscle is blocked because of a clot. Studies have shown that immediate GIK treatment can protect a heart that is not receiving sufficient blood flow. It can prevent heart muscle damage that might otherwise lead to immediate death or long-term heart failure.

"The glucose is an energy source that the heart may potentially use; the insulin helps it into the cells; and the potassium helps strengthen at the same time," said Ken Klein, Plano EMS coordinator. "There is not a serious downside to having the medicine."

Klein says that though GIK has been primarily used by hospitals in the past, this trial is substantial because it's never been done in an ambulance or on such a large double blind scale.

James Atkins, a UT Southwestern professor of internal medicine, agrees.

"We are trying to see if that case holds true in the environment that we are in, meaning the ambulance," said Atkins.

GIK has been used mainly before the medical community's acceptance of opening arteries using stents. Those are used to rescue someone in the midst of a heart attack by destroying an obstruction and holding the closed artery open.

"It has been tested in hospital in the past, but once we started using stents and opening the arteries, we need GIK. By the time the patient gets transported to the hospital and then examined in the emergency department, it takes almost an hour," Atkins said. "We are hoping that this reduces their mortality and strengthens the heart."

"Laboratory and clinical research demonstrates many substantial benefits from intravenous GIK metabolic support of the heart during coronary thrombosis," said Dr. Harry Selker, principal investigator of the trial. "GIK has been shown to reduce cardiac arrhythmias, slow progression of unstable angina pectoris to heart attack, limit the size of the heart attack, increase benefit from coronary reperfusion treatments, and reduce mortality."

"These benefits are greatest when GIK is used as early as possible in the course of ACS, when the risk is highest," said nurse Joni Beshansky, co-principal investigator.

Reports state that the trial would take approximately 26 months and, calculating the time to examine the findings, the treatment could be available in three years.

The success of this trial could mean life for thousands of Plano residents, according to Klein. The Plano Fire Department responds to 160 to 180 heart attack calls per month.

"If our trial confirms a 30 to 50 percent reduction in mortality rates as in prior GIK trials, this inexpensive treatment could substantially reduce the most common cause of death and hospitalization in the US," said Dr. Selker.

The success of the medicine wouldn't necessarily have any bearing on the response of the Plano Fire Department, said Klein.

"It would just be another medicine for us to administer while we transport the patient," he said.

Plano was chosen as one of 26 cities across the country to take part in this study. Klein says that can be credited to the department's longstanding relationship with the college.

But Atkins says there is more to it.

"They have a very tight quality control system, which is essentially when going into a trial like this," he said.

For more information concerning this clinical trial call 214-648-4433.

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