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NEW ARIZONA PROGRAM FOR 9-1-1 DISPATCHERS SAVES LIVES

Sudden cardiac arrest is a leading cause of death in Arizona and across the country. It can happen to anyone, anywhere, at any time. National CPR/AED Awareness Week, June 1-7, 2012, recognizes the critical importance of bystander CPR and Automated External Defibrillators (AED) in saving lives from sudden cardiac arrest. With the development of a new, statewide program of Dispatch-Assisted CPR for 9-1-1 callers, Arizona has taken CPR lifesaving to the next level.

A new partnership between the Arizona Department of Health Services and emergency dispatch centers across Arizona serves as a national model. The Department sponsors training and works with dispatchers and call-takers to evaluate and improve this life saving intervention.

Since the program started in 2011, Mesa has increased the rates of bystander CPR by 27 percent and reduced the time to first chest compression by 37 percent. A review of hospital records shows these actions have saved the lives of at least thirteen people.

“Implementing this program has been a collaborative effort between Health Services, the police department and the fire department here in Mesa,” said Brian Kotsur, Mesa Battalion Chief who oversaw the revisions as deputy alarm room chief. “We are well on the way to expediting care to those who call 9-1-1 and are starting to see the benefits of our efforts.”

The training in Mesa inspired the Department to organize two separate Dispatch Academies in December and April. Dispatchers from across the state learned the latest techniques for identifying cardiac arrest over the phone and starting CPR instructions as early as possible during the 9-1-1 calls.

“Dispatch-assisted CPR is crucial to improving survival from sudden cardiac arrest here in Arizona and nationwide,” said Dr. Ben Bobrow, medical director at ADHS. “Without someone pushing hard and fast in the center of the victim’s chest, survival is very unlikely. It’s a similar concept for improving the system. We have to keep pushing hard and fast to get and evaluate the data from each and every one of our 9-1-1 centers to be able to continue to improve. Measurement is the key – it’s that simple.”

The program in Mesa is only part of an effort to improve dispatch-assisted CPR and survival from sudden cardiac arrest statewide. Health Services also receives data from Rural Metro’s Glendale and Tucson offices, the Flagstaff Communications Center and the Sedona Regional Communications Center.

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