

Dr. Nhan Nguyen



## METHODIST RICHARDSON MEDICAL CENTER exceeds national expectations

by JACKIE KENNEDY photo by PATRICK RUTHERFORD

Heart patients who enter the emergency room at Methodist Richardson Medical Center, either as walk-ins or by ambulance, receive the quickest of care, which is crucial to recovery, thanks to the medical center's progressive push to meet and surpass national benchmarks for quality care.

Recognition for the exceptional care provided at Methodist Richardson came in January when the Society of Chest Pain Centers named the medical center an Accredited, Cycle III Chest Pain Center, putting it among few in the region with this top tier accreditation, according to Chief of Staff Dr. Nhan Nguyen, cardiologist and medical director of the Cardiac Cath Lab.

Accredited chest pain centers must meet or exceed a wide set of criteria, from training of emergency personnel to timely diagnosis and treatment of heart attacks, and must undergo on-site evaluations by a team of reviewers.

Methodist Richardson ranks among the top 10 percent in the nation for prompt attention to heart attack patients.

"Over the last three years, we've worked hard on achieving exceptional quality care using Core Measures benchmarks," says Dr. Nguyen. "One of the most important core measures is door-to-balloon time."

Door-to-balloon time is the time it takes hospital personnel to treat patients suffering from heart attacks, from the moment the patient enters the emergency room to receiving angioplasty, a procedure to reopen a blocked artery. The average door-to-balloon time at Methodist Richardson is better than the national benchmark of 90 minutes.

"It's important because treating patients fast can save their lives and prevents heart failure," says Dr. Nguyen.

The national goal is to be able to re-establish blood circulation to the heart in under 90 minutes from the time a patient arrives to the ER with a heart attack. In the last two years, we have hit that goal of under 90 minutes, 100 percent of the time."

That is a phenomenal achievement. And what's more, Methodist Richardson in the past two years has averaged a

door-to-balloon time of less than 70 minutes, even on weekends and after-hours. Part of what has made the success possible is conducting concurrent reviews of every heart attack incident, according to the chief of staff.

"We evaluate the times and every detail about each hospital stay to see if the standard of care is met; and if there's any deviation, we evaluate and isolate down to what the problem was and make sure it gets corrected and doesn't happen again," says Dr. Nguyen. "We don't wait to assess once a quarter. We do this on every single case that comes in, so much so that all the hospital staff is especially aware and attuned to this strict standard of care and it becomes automatic. As a result, there is a new culture in the hospital where this standard for delivery of care is common; it's what we do."

While most reviews take several months for approval, accreditation reviewers who visited the medical center in early January "called us back within a week and said we'd passed with flying colors to receive Level 3 accreditation," says Dr. Nguyen. "We are one of only four in the region that have the Level 3 accreditation," which sets higher standards and is harder to achieve.

"We have a dedicated group of physicians and nurses who strive for this goal," says Dr. Nguyen. "People from other hospitals who visit are awed by our data. Hospitals all over the country struggle to get these numbers."

A dedicated interventional program helps Methodist Richardson maintain its impressive door-to-balloon time. Interventional cardiologists are on-call, 24/7, to respond to heart patient needs. A cardiac team is also on call for immediate response.

Along with devoting extra training time to hospital staff, the team at Methodist Richardson has gone out-of-house to provide extra education and training on treating heart patients to local fire departments, ambulance staff and emergency medical services.

Why go this extra mile?

"It's for superior patient care," says Dr. Nguyen. "We are a relatively small

**Heart attacks are the leading cause of death in the United States**, with 600,000 dying annually of heart disease. That's more than all of cancer combined. More than five million Americans visit hospitals each year with chest pain. The classic symptoms of a heart attack include chest pain, heartburn or indigestion, shortness of breath, nausea, palpitations, profuse sweating, and light-headedness or dizziness. If you think you are having a heart attack, call 911, take an aspirin, and rest until the ambulance arrives.

Methodist Richardson Medical Center has offered compassionate medical, surgical and behavioral health services for more than 40 years. The medical center was the first health care facility to receive the Texas Award for Performance Excellence. For more, visit [www.MethodistRichardson.org](http://www.MethodistRichardson.org).

The Society of Chest Pain Centers is a nonprofit international professional organization that focuses on improving care for patients with acute coronary syndromes and related maladies. For more, visit [www.sccpc.org](http://www.sccpc.org).

hospital, but we are nimble enough and have a dedicated staff motivated enough to provide the best standard possible for our patients. In the past we've been in the 90th percentile in all of these benchmarks, but we felt that wasn't good enough. We wanted our community to be assured that everyone who shows up at our emergency room gets the best of care, every time."

Support from medical center administration helped "push this program along," according to Dr. Nguyen. "They've given us all the necessary resources to accomplish this."

In addition to achieving excellent door-to-balloon times, Methodist Richardson has also been 100% on many other important core measures, including providing life-saving medications (such as aspirin and beta blockers) and education (such as information on smoking cessation, exercise and healthy diet) to every heart patient.

"Those are incredible numbers that we'd put up against any hospital in the country, not just in the area," says Dr. Nguyen. Every single one of our patients simply receives the best care."