

# Lakeland Opens First Certified Stroke Center in County

Nearly every physician realizes the good news/bad news when treating patients with acute stroke. The good news is that tissue plasminogen activator (tPA) can prevent or even reverse brain damage due to ischemic stroke. The bad news is that patients must receive this treatment within three hours, a challenge considering that patients must recognize the possibility of a stroke, arrive at the hospital and receive the necessary assessments, all within that three-hour window.

## **Stroke Care Requires Emergent Diagnosis and Treatment**

To meet this challenge, Lakeland Regional Medical Center in St. Joseph has opened the first Primary

Stroke Center in Berrien County and is seeking certification by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO).

Primary stroke care is one of the most powerful interventions available for stroke patients, according to the 2001 National Sentinel Audit of Stroke. The study found that dedicated stroke care reduced fatalities by about 25 percent.

“Time loss is brain loss when a stroke is occurring,” says **Loren Hamel, MD**, vice president of medical affairs. “Our staff is trained and all of our diagnostic processes have been prepared to perform evaluations