

CARDIAC ARREST RESEARCH STUDIES

Myths about Cardiac Arrest

There are many public misconceptions regarding cardiac arrest. They include:

Myth: The survival rate from cardiac arrest is high.

Reality: The survival rate from cardiac arrest is dismal. The national average survival rate from cardiac arrest is 7.9%. This means that more than 9 out of 10 persons die from cardiac arrest with our current treatments.

Myth: The current treatments for cardiac arrest are well established because of their proven effectiveness.

Reality: The standard treatments for cardiac arrest are, for the most part, untested. Because of this, survival rates are dismal. Further, it is unknown whether the standard treatments currently used are beneficial or harmful. Research needs to be conducted to evaluate promising interventions that hold significant potential to improve cardiac arrest survival rates in Milwaukee County and the nation.

Myth: A heart attack and cardiac arrest are the same thing.

Reality: A heart attack and cardiac arrest are completely different. A heart attack occurs when a blood clot blocks blood flow in an artery to the heart, causing a portion of the heart muscle to die. The heart continues to pump blood and survival is excellent if it can be treated within hours. A cardiac arrest occurs when the heart suddenly and unexpectedly goes into a heart rhythm that does not pump blood, immediately causing no blood flow to the entire body, resulting in instant collapse and loss of consciousness. The survival rate is dismal. Treatment (calling 911, performing bystander CPR, defibrillation (shocking the heart), and delivery of advanced life support) must begin immediately if there is any hope for survival.

Myth: Cardiac arrest is not very common.

Reality: It is estimated there are approximately 450,000 cardiac arrests each year in the United States. To get an understanding of this number, it is similar to 2 full 747s crashing and killing everyone on board each day in the United States! It is the leading cause of death in this country.