SYMPTOMS AND EXAM

HIGH RISK

Sudden onset of neurological dysfunction with persistent weakness or numbness on half of the face/body, difficulty speaking or understanding speech, partial loss of vision or double vision, dizziness, imbalance, difficulty walking.

The patient is likely to have abnormal neurological exam findings; signs and symptoms that improved > 24 hours from onset are more likely to be associated with stroke on imaging.

MODERATE RISK

Symptoms as outlined in the “high risk” column; the patient has already had a complete stroke work up and appropriate secondary stroke prevention measures are in place. Include a clinical exam noting any significant or new neurologic deficits.

Referral indication may include the need for an opinion regarding stroke etiology, or for recurrent strokes.

LOW RISK

Remote history of stroke without new neurologic symptoms or exam findings; question of stroke etiology or long term management.

If symptoms are related to ongoing neurologic deficit, spasticity, or pain then a Physiatry / Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation consult should be considered.

SUGGESTED PREVISIT WORKUP

PATIENTS WITH ACUTE ONSET OF STROKE SYMPTOMS SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO CALL 911 AND SHOULD BE EVALUATED IN THE ED.

Imaging: MRI brain, CT head if unable to do MRI; CTA or MRA head and neck preferred, carotid ultrasound only if unable to do either CTA/MRA

Cardiac Evaluation as indicated: TTE with bubble study and EKG; Troponin and Telemetry while hospitalized

Labs: Fasting lipid panel, fasting blood glucose or HbA1c, CBC, CMP, and consider PT/INR, aPTT, and urinalysis in appropriate cases

SUGGESTED PREVISIT WORKUP

Results for Imaging, Cardiac Evaluation, and Labs from the “high risk” column should be provided, or promptly ordered if necessary, by the referring provider

Continue secondary stroke prevention measures.

Neurologist can help determine if there is a need for more specialized testing, such as TEE, prolonged cardiac monitoring, or evaluation for blood coagulation disorders.

SUGGESTED MANAGEMENT

Ensure appropriate secondary stroke prevention measures are in place.

If questioning need for neurologic evaluation, please call to speak with one of our neurologists.

CLINICAL PEARLS

- Actual reports of diagnostic testing (imaging, cardiac evaluation, labs) are strongly preferred over second hand reports of results.
- Please make sure actual images are available for review on IMPAX or disc prior to the patient’s appointment. If needed, get guidance from where the images were done.
- If images cannot be sent to MaineHealth IMPAX Server, then consider sending CD’s of all neuroimaging, including MRI, MRA, CT, CTA, and carotid ultrasounds, before the appointment so we can have imaging transferred to the server. CD’s brought to the office sometimes cannot be opened on the doctors’ desktop computers.

Reviewed by Christopher Cummings, MD

These clinical practice guidelines describe generally recommended evidence-based interventions for the evaluation, diagnosis and treatment of specific diseases or conditions. The guidelines are: (i) not considered to be entirely inclusive or exclusive of all methods of reasonable care that can obtain or produce the same results, and are not a statement of the standard of medical care; (ii) based on information available at the time and may not reflect the most current evidenced-based literature available at subsequent times; and (iii) not intended to substitute for the independent professional judgment of the responsible clinician(s). No set of guidelines can address the individual variation among patients or their unique needs, nor the combination of resources available to a particular community, provider or healthcare professional. Deviations from clinical practice guidelines thus may be appropriate based upon the specific patient circumstances.