

Beaumont doctors call for training to reduce sudden cardiac arrest fatalities in schools

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One of the leading causes of death in the United States is sudden cardiac arrest, which claims the lives of more than 325,000 people each year. In a study published in the April issue of the journal *Resuscitation*, Beaumont doctors found that cardiac arrests in K-12 schools are extremely rare, less than 0.2 percent, but out of 47 people who experienced cardiac arrest over a six-year period at K-12 schools, only 15 survived.

Survival rate was three times greater, however, when bystanders used a device called an [automated external defibrillator](#), or AED, that helps the heart restore a normal rhythm.

The study "Cardiac Arrests in Schools: Assessing use of Automated External Defibrillators on School Campuses," was led by principal investigator Robert Swor, D.O., emergency medicine physician at Beaumont Hospital, Royal Oak, and a research team including Edward Walton, M.D., Beaumont's director of pediatric emergency medicine.

A more widespread and standardized approach that would incorporate school drills and training in CPR and AED is needed to improve emergency response, the researchers say.

"Our findings highlight that schools are community centers and that emergency response planning in schools must focus not only on children and must extend beyond the school day," says Dr. Swor. Within the study population, most (31) of the 47 affected people were over the age

of 19 and a third of the events occurred in the evening at schools.

This study is unprecedented, as no other published research explores the reasons why bystanders don't use AEDs. Such information is key to enhancing [sudden cardiac arrest](#) responses on school campuses. In one of every three cardiac arrests, an available AED was not used. The bystanders were either unable to recognize that the patient was having a [cardiac arrest](#), were unaware that the school had an AED, or thought that the person was having a [seizure](#) rather than a cardiac arrest. Teaching potential [bystanders](#) how to recognize cardiac arrest and having regular drills would be an important aspect of emergency response training, the researchers say.

More attention is being paid to the need for standardized emergency response plans in schools at the governmental level. Rep. Gail Haines introduced a bill in February 2013 to mandate a cardiac emergency response plan that would include using and regularly maintaining AEDs, training high school students to use AEDs and perform CPR, and having frequent cardiac emergency drills in Michigan schools.

The research team used data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention-sponsored Cardiac Arrest Registry to Enhance Survival and an Oakland County, Mich., registry of cardiac arrests. Telephone interviews were conducted to collect descriptive data about the nature of each incident.

Provided by Beaumont Health System

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