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## Doctors' donations could save a life someday

• MetroWest Medical ER workers give local schools defibrillators

By Jon Brodtkin  
NEWS STAFF WRITER

MetroWest Medical Center's emergency room doctors have donated portable defibrillators to 13 local high schools, saying the

life-saving devices could be especially useful at athletic contests.

Automated external defibrillators, which deliver an electric shock to restore normal heart rhythms in victims of sudden cardiac arrest, have become increasingly common in schools and other public places in recent years.

A 62-year-old high school football referee who collapsed during

a game in Wellesley in September 2002 was saved with a defibrillator.

"There's been a big push recently to get defibrillators into as many public access places as possible - airports, a lot of museums have them. We felt the schools should be involved as well," said Dr. Matt Zogby, assistant director of the private physician group that staffs the MetroWest Medical

Center emergency rooms in Framingham and Natick.

In some rare cases, athletes can suffer sudden cardiac arrest upon being struck in the chest.

"Unless the patient is defibrillated quickly, their chances of survival really aren't good," Zogby said.

Automated external defibrillators assess the heart's rhythm to determine whether the patient is

suffering from ventricular fibrillation or fast ventricular tachycardia, the major types of fatal sudden cardiac arrests, according to the American Heart Association. If necessary, the defibrillator then delivers an electric shock.

Upon suffering sudden cardiac arrest, a patient's chance of survival decreases 7 percent to 10 percent each minute that passes DEFIBRILLATORS. Page A10

## Doctors donate defibs

DEFIBRILLATORS, *From A1* without defibrillation, according to the American College of Emergency Physicians. Cardiac arrest victims are most likely to survive if revived within four minutes, the group says.

The MetroWest emergency physician group donated defibrillators to the following school systems: Ashland, Dover/Sherborn, Holliston, Hopkinton, Keefe Tech, Lincoln/Sudbury, Medfield, Medway, Millis, Natick, Northborough/Southborough, Wayland and Wellesley. The gifts were delivered about a month ago.

Framingham already has defibrillators in each school and so did not accept a donation.

Karen Rufo, the Natick school system's nurse leader, expects the high school's new defibrillator will not just gather dust

"I hope that it's not necessary to use it, but given the statistics, my guess is at some point it will get used," Rufo said. "You know, it might not be a student we use it for. It might be a parent a spectator.... All you need to do is save one life. You can't put a monetary value on a human life"

An estimated 250,000 Americans die each year of coronary heart disease without being hospitalized, and most of those sudden deaths are caused by cardiac arrests, according to the American Heart Association.

The defibrillator Natick High School received is its second. It recently received its first from the state Department of Public Health, Rufo said. Wilson Middle School has also ordered one defibrillator, and Rufo said she

aims to get them into all the town's schools,

Zogby said the 13 defibrillators, which they bought from **Defibtech, a Connecticut company**, cost the physician group about \$25,000.

Using the defibrillator is "very simple," said Ed Burman, a Framingham Police officer, emergency medical technician and CPR instructor who has offered training to the schools receiving the devices.

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