



## Focus on Quality Assurance Helps Boost Survival Rates

What are we doing in Seattle and King County that results in some of the world's highest survival rates for out-of-hospital sudden cardiac arrest? And how is it possible that in 2008, the survival rate here for witnessed, shockable cardiac arrest was – at above 50 percent – the highest ever reported anywhere?

Certainly, our paramedic training program is crucial, along with groundbreaking medical research. But another key to our success is an intense commitment to constant medical review to ensure quality of care. Since Seattle Medic One began 40 years ago, quality assurance and improvement have been top concerns.

Each year, the Medic One Foundation provides funding for this medical review so that quality assurance remains a sharp focus. For four decades, Medic One Co-founder Dr. Leonard Cobb has overseen the painstaking, scientific efforts to track what methods work best to improve survival rates from out-of-hospital cardiac arrest.

Dr. Cobb explains, "It was reassuring to see such a high survival rate in 2008, which was up from 2007. But annual statistics don't necessarily make for a long-term trend. Dramatic jumps are wonderful, but they're just a bump in a long road. What's more important is that over the course of years, we've seen steady improvement in survival rates. That we're anywhere near a 50-50 rate is remarkable."

Dr. Cobb adds that looking critically at current methods and outcomes can lead to changing a medical protocol in the field. For example, "In the past three years we've made strong efforts to minimize any interruptions of chest compressions of patients with cardiac arrest because constant compressions are likely to increase resuscitation rates. Our goal is that any interruption is limited to just 10 seconds. We're not hitting that goal 100 percent of the time, but we're getting there, and trying to save more lives."