

DEFI PROJECT

A Life-Saving Impulse

From Beatrix Lampe, 16.10.08, 21:32h, updated 16.10.08, 23:42h

The "Defi Köln" project installs defibrillators in all branch offices of the Sparkasse savings bank in Cologne. A comprehensive first-aid training will be provided to the citizens to increase considerably the survival rate of cardiac arrest patients.



The handy defibrillator is easy to operate for non-professionals and can save lives. (Bild: Hennes)

COLOGNE – Sudden cardiac arrest – up to 1000 people suffer this fate in Cologne every year: the circulation collapses, in most cases connected with ventricular fibrillation; the pulse and respiration stop. Only quick help within a few minutes can help – up to now, not more than every fifth patient has survived. With the installation of defibrillators in all 87 Cologne branch offices of the Sparkasse Köln-Bonn and an extensive training campaign for citizens, the Förderverein des Herzzentrums der Universität zu Köln (society supporting the cardiology centre of the University of Cologne), the Institut für Notfallmedizin (institute for emergency medicine) and the Sparkasse want to decrease considerably the mortality rate after sudden cardiac arrest.

The first of these easy-to-use live-saving devices has now been installed in the lobby of the bank's headquarters at Rudolfplatz, and from 1st January 2009, the defibrillators will be available in the entrance halls of all branch offices and connected to the rescue control centre, thanks to the support of the telephone provider Netcologne. Using an EC card, anyone can at any time enter the entrance halls, which are monitored by cameras, to fetch the life-saving devices and use them without delay. "If we did not make the access so easy, the help would not be effective", says Winfried Helmes from the Förderverein des Herzzentrums, confident that the units will not be misused.

"The Cologners must know that anyone can help", says private lecturer Carsten Zobel from the cardiology centre, recommending the following procedure: "Dial 112 to call the rescuers. Start the resuscitation with cardiac massage, send someone who can run fast to fetch the defibrillator from the next Sparkasse branch office, and use it." According to Prof. Hans W. Höpp from the cardiology centre, the chance to survive a cardiac arrest decreases by ten percent every minute; this is why the handy device must be used quickly to give the impulse. You cannot do anything wrong – the

defibrillator explains every step and only issues a shock if the patient really does not have a pulse.

As important as the provision of the devices, which the Förderverein and the Sparkasse finance with half a million Euro, is a training campaign. "We offer first-aid courses for cardiac arrest in co-operation with all rescue organisations to make more people potential rescuers", says Prof. Alex Lechleuthner, head of the Institut für Notfallmedizin. The "Defi Köln" project wants to become particularly active in schools to give trainings in the rescue of heart patients. "To help must become »hip«", this is Prof. Höpp's wish.

COMMENT – DEFI PROJECT

Not just Pure Luck

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With the easily accessible defibrillators that will in the future be available in all Cologne Sparkasse branch offices, the "Defi" project might contribute to the survival of several hundred cardiac arrest victims a year in Cologne. However, the devices alone will not help.

The first experiences with the extensive provision of defibrillators were collected at an extraordinary place but are encouraging nevertheless: In the casinos of Las Vegas, where sudden cardiac arrest is apparently not all that uncommon, the survival rate of cardiac arrest patients increased from ten to more than 70 percent after the installation of easily accessible defibrillators.

Like in Las Vegas, the survival of a cardiac arrest should cease to be pure luck in Cologne now. With the easily accessible and easy-to-use defibrillators that will in the future be available in all Cologne Sparkasse branch offices, the "Defi" project might contribute to the survival of several hundred cardiac arrest victims a year.

However, the devices alone will not have any effect – first of all, people must have the courage to do anything at all. Someone who knows that you cannot do anything wrong with the self-explanatory unit, is not too shocked to act and knows the first-aid measures to resuscitate a heart patient, can use the critical minutes before the professional rescuers arrive. This is why a comprehensive training campaign, which also addresses children and youth, will win the prize – like in Las Vegas.