

# News

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\*\*\*\*New cooperative program links  
medical school and hospitals  
to train emergency physicians

DALLAS -- People faced with a sudden medical emergency have a right to expect the highest quality medical care, says Dr. Michael Krentz, chief of emergency medicine at The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas. Providing quality emergency care will require many more training programs in emergency medicine, he says.

"What about those people on Delta Flight 1141 (which crashed at Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport Aug. 31), or the man who's going to have an unexpected massive heart attack, or the child who is choking on a foreign object?" Krentz asks. "They don't want potluck emergency care; they expect that the system will provide the same quality medical care for them that they would choose for themselves if afflicted with serious illnesses such as cancer or heart disease."

To help meet a critical need for trained emergency medicine physicians, a new affiliated emergency medicine residency program is being established at UT Southwestern. Krentz will direct the program, which will be conducted at five cooperating area hospitals: Parkland Memorial Hospital, Baylor University Medical Center, Methodist Medical Center, Presbyterian Hospital and Children's Medical Center. Krentz says the program will be one of several programs in major cities in the country that combine a medical school, county hospital and private hospitals.

Krentz is laying the groundwork for the program by developing the curriculum and other materials to present to the Residency Review Committee of the American Medical Association for accreditation. On his current schedule, Krentz hopes to enroll a full complement of 24 residents in the Dallas program within the next three years.

A community's need for an efficient coordinated emergency medical system was dramatically underscored recently when Delta Air Lines Flight 1141 crashed at Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport. Ten area hospitals, including Parkland and Methodist in Dallas, treated survivors of the crash. Hospitals cooperated with each other to assure the best care for patients suffering the trauma of a plane crash.

Residency training programs are essential to assure physicians who can provide top-quality care, Krentz says. "Emergency medicine is a specialty in breadth. The physician must treat the cardiac victim with the same approach and level of expertise as the cardiologist, for example." Emergency Medicine is one of the most popular residencies in medicine, primarily because it is so broadly based. These physicians work in surgery, medicine, trauma, obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics, psychiatry and other specialties.

Emergency medicine is the newest medical specialty. It was officially recognized in 1979 by the American Board of Medical Specialists. The first certification examination was administered by the American Board of Emergency Medicine in 1980. While physicians have had the option to become certified in emergency medicine by full-time practice in the field, as of July 1, 1988, this option is no longer open. Now, to enter the specialty, the physician must complete a formal residency program.

When the program starts, residents will train in the emergency departments and other services at the five participating hospitals. "All the hospitals currently are noted for their excellent emergency facilities," Krentz explained. Each institution will provide top-quality emergency medicine education through this cooperative program, and the area will benefit from having an enhanced regional emergency medical system."

(More)



Emergency medicine residents will spend most of their first and second years of training at Parkland Memorial Hospital, which is the primary teaching hospital for UT Southwestern Medical Center and the major public health care institution in Dallas County. Parkland is the area's primary level I trauma center and receives more than 1,500 major trauma cases per year while handling about 158,000 emergency patient visits each year.

The other hospitals participating in the residency program are private institutions. Baylor University Medical Center handles 43,000 emergency patients annually. Methodist Medical Center, located in Southwest Dallas, sees 30,000 visits each year in its emergency department. Presbyterian Hospital, in North Dallas, has more than 33,000 annual patient visits to the emergency department. Children's Medical Center is the primary pediatric teaching facility for UT Southwestern, and its emergency department sees about 33,000 patients per year.

At each hospital an associate program director will coordinate the training program: Drs. Leonard Riggs and Dighton Packard at Baylor, Dr. James Hayes at Methodist, Dr. Compton Broders at Presbyterian, Dr. Joel Steinberg at Children's and Dr. Krentz at Parkland.

The program will be the second civilian program in Texas and one of 77 programs nationwide. There are currently a civilian emergency medicine residency program in El Paso and two military programs in San Antonio.

Krentz says there is a critical need for more emergency medicine residencies nationwide. "Of the 23,000 doctors practicing emergency medicine now, there are only 6,000 who are board-certified and perhaps another 5,000 ready to be certified," Krentz explained. Last year there were 3,000 applicants for only 450 available emergency medicine residency slots in the U.S.

The Dallas program will aim at expanding emergency department coverage by physicians certified in emergency medicine. Nationally, this has become a concern. Recent court cases in New York and regulations in California and New Jersey have challenged some hospitals' emergency care as inadequate because residents and interns were overworked, undertrained and inadequately supervised.

Dallas is already well-known for quality trauma care -- Parkland Memorial Hospital is the third busiest trauma center in the nation. "The exciting thing about this program," Krentz explained, "is that here in Dallas we have a strong combination: a medical school with an international reputation, a public hospital with a stellar national reputation, plus the private hospitals, all with excellent emergency care facilities. I don't see any reason why this program will not be the premier model emergency medicine residency program, and our graduates will truly be top-quality."

A native of Arizona, Krentz came to UT Southwestern from John C. Lincoln Hospital in Phoenix, where he helped develop a level I trauma center and was administrator of other emergency facilities.

Krentz is immediate past president of the American College of Emergency Physicians, which is headquartered in Dallas. He was board-certified in emergency medicine in 1984 and has been active in training and continuing education of emergency medicine professionals. He received his M.D. degree from the Medical College of Wisconsin in 1973.

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Note: The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas Comprises Southwestern Medical School, Southwestern Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences and Southwestern Allied Health Sciences School.