

News

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Texas "Hotlines" for Burns Open

DALLAS--A precedent-setting "hotline" offering free consultations to medical personnel who work with burn patients was officially opened Wednesday, January 11 at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Dallas.

The emergency "hotline," part of an H.E.W.-funded Regional Burn Demonstration Program, is manned around the clock by trauma physicians specializing in burn care. Located in the center's Cary Building, the phone provides access for consultations on acute or long-term medical care during office hours. In addition, consultations with other health-care specialists, such as physical and occupational therapists, burn nurses, psychologists and social workers will be available.

Also opening was a "hotline" for regional health personnel to call in on a 24-hour-a-day basis to report the number, extent and severity of new burn cases. The program needs this information in order to plan programs for professionals in burn care, according to Dr. Charles Baxter, professor of surgery, UTHSCD, and project director. These educational aspects of the project include beginning the massive teaching program that will bring physicians and other burn workers into Parkland Memorial Hospital for speciality training sessions and will send health teams throughout the state leading seminars and training sessions. Audiovisual programs for use with groups will also be developed.

The "hotline" idea for the regional programs was developed by Baxter, who included the concept in his original proposal to the Emergency Services Administration of H.E.W. as part of the one and one-half to two million dollar contract. While other regional programs are following Texas' lead and planning their own "hotlines," Baxter's prototype was the first to open.

first add burn "hotlines"

The surgeon stated that in another year both "hotline" procedures will be expanded to cover the state.

Partners with the UT center in developing and carrying out the program are the four Texas Emergency Medical Services in the areas the program covers--Trinity Valley (Fort Worth), Permian Basin (Odessa), West Central Texas (Abilene), and Panhandle (Amarillo). The program works with local EMS services in Dallas.

This three-year contract is one of six for Regional Burn Demonstration Programs across the country. Other contracting regions are New England, New York, northern Nevada, Alabama and San Diego. All have been designated Regional Burn Centers.

The Parkland Burn Unit, staffed with burn specialists from the UT Health Science Center, is already designated a burn center by the American Burn Association (ABA) guidelines, according to Baxter. The unit has 20 adult and 10 pediatric beds, said Baxter, an internationally-known burn expert himself.

Co-medical directors of the program are Baxter and Dr. Phala Helm, associate professor and chairman of the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation.

Assistant medical director is Dr. John Hunt, assistant professor of surgery. Emergency Medical System Director is Dr. James Finney of Fort Worth, director of the Trinity Valley EMS area.

Mary Gordon, R.N., M.S., is program director while Cornelia Kenner, R.N., M.S., serves as nurse consultant. Other staff members are Dr. Fred Cromes, assistant professor, Dr. Jeanne Achterberg-Lawlis, assistant professor, and Maureen O'Brien, instructor, all in the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. All are center faculty members. Acting as consultants are Parkland employees Margey Head, physical therapist, and Gerry Pullium, occupational therapist.

According to Gordon, the "hotline" used for medical care is a "call-collect" number. The one for reporting burn injuries is a WATS line. For information on how to call these "hotlines," health professionals in the region can call the program office at 214/688-3771.

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