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News

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*****Television network helps educate doctors, nurses and patients.

DALLAS--More Dallas-Ft. Worth area doctors and nurses are watching television. But instead of Dick Van Dyke reruns or Fantasy Island, they're viewing programs with titles like "Gunshot Wound to the Aorta and Vena Cava," "Post Pulmonary Insufficiency," "Disorders of the Heartbeat" and hundreds of other programs in a wide category of medical subjects.

Produced by the Dallas Area Hospital Television System (DAHTS) the programs are beamed 'live' to six metropolitan teaching hospitals, and supplied by videocassette to 24 other institutions as far away as Florida and North Dakota. Nearly 1,000 medical programs serve to supplement patient education, continuing education for physicians and in-service education in hospitals, health centers and clinics.

An often-heard criticism that television doesn't live up to its potential could hardly apply to DAHTS programming. Begun in 1972, the Dallas Area Hospital Television System sought to disseminate some of the knowledge of The University of Texas Health Science Center at Dallas. Today, under the direction of former broadcast journalist Phoebe Wharton, DAHTS has grown to the point that thousands of doctors, nurses and patients nationwide stay in touch with the latest developments as well as basics of medicine.

"This is an educational network," says executive director Wharton. "Our system works because the dedicated health professional is constantly bombarded with new information, discoveries and techniques. By offering the latest medical information in a visual way, we reach those who truly need the service to supplement their training. Hopefully, we do it in a pleasant and interesting way."

From television studios at UTHSCD, DAHTS sends its microwave signal to "antenna members" in the metroplex. Antenna members--those who subscribe at the highest level of membership in the shared-service consortium--are the only members who receive either live or pre-recorded programming on a daily, scheduled basis. They include Baylor University Medical Center, Methodist Hospital, Presbyterian Hospital, St. Paul Hospital, the Veteran's Administration Medical Center, the entire University of Texas Health Science Center at Dallas and the newest member, the Granville C. Morton Cancer and Research Hospital.

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The balance of DAHTS' members are those who subscribe only to the extensive videocassette library. These members include state schools, clinics, hospitals and city health departments as far away as Florida, Kansas and North Dakota.

Grand Rounds--intensely technical lectures and demonstrations given by doctors to other doctors--are videotaped as a matter of course. Each Thursday morning, in one of the lecture halls at the health science center, several hundred physicians gather to health details of the work of one of their colleagues.

The lecture halls have been specially adapted for color cameras, which record the lectures, simultaneously sending the program live to antenna members. Other institutions too far away, or those unable to afford the cost of live service, are able to pick out grand round lectures and any other programs in the DAHTS catalogue.

Continuing education is also furthered by DAHTS. Physicians may apply for continuing education credits as a result of viewing certain medical programs..

Internal medicine grand rounds are only a portion of the programs produced by DAHTS. Phoebe Wharton and her staff are always on the lookout for any subject which might interest patients, nurses or physicians. Even hospital management is highlighted in the mini-telecourses, thus bringing the expertise and efficiency of a large institution into the office of a small hospital or clinic.

DAHTS' signal may not be the strongest; it will never steal a share of prime-time ratings. But in its own way it has a significant impact.

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