

SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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UT SOUTHWESTERN PHYSICIANS SUPPORT AND ASSIST PARAMEDICS

DALLAS— November 25, 1997 – To call for an ambulance in Dallas 25 years ago meant to wait for a crew that had little or no training -- and usually was employed by a funeral home -- for a ride to the nearest hospital. That changed in November 1972, when the city of Dallas established an ambulance system that from the beginning has been guided by UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas experts.

As Emergency Medical Services in Dallas marks its 25th anniversary, paramedics and technicians trained at UT Southwestern are, on average, providing pre-hospital and often life-saving treatment less than five minutes after 911 emergency operators receive the call for help.

Now UT Southwestern emergency medicine physicians can use a fully-equipped police car to monitor emergencies on the streets of Dallas and its suburbs. The vehicle was donated by the Highland Park Police Department.

"Part of my job is to get out in the field with the paramedics," said Dr. Brian Zachariah, assistant professor of emergency medicine and the EMS medical director for Dallas, 11 suburbs and Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport. "When I'm at the scene I can lend medical assistance and provide additional real-life training to the paramedics. I'm there to support the men and women in the field as well as provide direct education."

As medical director, Zachariah oversees emergency-response operations and establishes protocol for responding to and managing emergencies, from heart attacks to car crashes to hazardous materials leaks in Dallas, Carrollton, Farmers Branch, DeSoto, Duncanville, Garland, Highland Park, Irving, Lancaster, Mesquite, Richardson, University Park and Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport. Zachariah is also one of the UT Southwestern emergency medicine physicians who treats patients in Parkland Memorial Hospital's emergency department.

He said the emergency-response car will allow in-the-field participation similar to the early days of EMS in Dallas, when Dr. James M. Atkins, a UT Southwestern cardiologist and professor

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of internal medicine, trained the first Dallas Fire Department paramedics to revive cardiac-arrest patients with defibrillators. Atkins and his UT Southwestern assistants often drove to emergencies to assist and monitor the new paramedics.

Atkins, EMS medical director from 1972 to 1996, now directs Emergency Medicine Education at Southwestern Allied Health Sciences School, supervising the training of emergency medical technicians and paramedics, who respond to more than 130,000 calls for help every year in the Dallas area.

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