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**CONTACTS: Leni Kirkman, Julie Wiley
210-358-2335**

University Hospital receives additional \$1 million from unsafe driver fines *Driver responsibility program is vital to Texas' stressed trauma system*

(San Antonio, TX - September 20, 2007) Bad drivers are responsible for causing many of the critical injuries treated at the Level I Trauma Center at University Hospital. Those caught driving while intoxicated, recklessly or without liability insurance are also responsible for the \$1 million check recently sent to the hospital to help cover the costs of providing around-the-clock care for the seriously injured.

The \$1,052,309 received by University Health System is part of \$16.1 million released this month by the Texas Department of State Health Services to reimburse hospitals just a fraction of the cost of providing trauma care to uninsured patients.

Last year, University Hospital spent \$12.2 million providing trauma care to patients with no means to pay. Including this latest reimbursement, University Health System has received just over \$3.1 million – or about 25 percent of its cost – this year from the Texas Driver Responsibility Program. Established by the Texas Legislature in 2003, the program imposes additional fines and surcharges on those habitually caught driving recklessly or under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

“The Driver Responsibility Program is a highly appropriate and tremendously important source of revenue for our trauma center,” said University Health System President/CEO George B. Hernández, Jr. “The trauma center is a life-saving community and regional resource that remains open around-the-clock, 365 days a year. It’s an expensive undertaking, but a responsibility we take very seriously.”

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TRAUMA FUNDING FOR UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

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Trauma is the leading cause of death among U.S. children and young adults (up to age 44). University Hospital is the lead trauma center for 22 counties, including Bexar and most of South Texas. The Trauma Center at University Hospital provides care for about 8,000 trauma patients each year.

“Trauma does not discriminate. It impacts the poorest of the poor, as well as the wealthiest business professionals,” added Ronald Stewart, MD, trauma medical director for University Hospital and chief of the division of trauma at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio. “The responsibility of a trauma center is to provide rapid assessment and stabilizing treatments without regard to patients’ insurance status or perceived ability to pay for services.”

The Texas Driver Responsibility Program is Texas’ first stable source of funding to reimburse trauma centers a portion of the cost of providing uncompensated care. Prior to its enactment, regional trauma care was largely the financial responsibility of local taxpayers in only those counties – like Bexar, Dallas and Harris – where the state’s largest Level I trauma centers are part of county hospital districts which levy local property taxes.

“While we must continue our efforts to assure that all of the trauma funds raised through this program are distributed to trauma centers as intended by state law, we are very grateful to Governor Perry, Lieutenant Governor Dewhurst, and the Bexar County Legislative Delegation for their continued support of University Hospital and the Texas Trauma System,” said Hernández.