



The University of Texas
Health Science Center
at San Antonio

For Immediate Release

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Hooked Alive

National program features dramatic survival of man impaled on steel hook

(SAN ANTONIO – November 9, 2006) “Like a fish hook?” That was the first question that came to Dr. Joe Johnston’s mind on December 2, 2004 when he was asked if he could board an AirLife helicopter to go help a man with a hook in his head. The answer was “no” but, even as an experienced trauma surgeon, Dr. Johnston was not prepared for what he would see when he walked up to Wayne Gail Creek that day. The dramatic story of Mr. Creek’s survival, after becoming impaled on a four-pound steel hook, is the focus of this week’s episode of *Untold Stories of the ER* on TLC. Members of the University Hospital/University of Texas Health Science Center trauma team were reunited with Mr. Creek and his wife at a screening of the episode on Thursday afternoon.

Neurosurgeon and Chair of the Department of Neurosurgery at the UT Health Science Center, Dr. David Jimenez headed up the team that removed the hook from Mr. Creek’s head after Dr. Johnston, and rescue workers at Holt of San Antonio, carefully cut the hook from a piece of heavy machinery. He participated with Dr. Johnston in the making of the episode, reenacting the events of that day. “Mr. Creek is a patient I will never forget,” said Dr. Jimenez. “As a neurosurgeon you see many unusual and difficult cases, but the fact that Mr. Creek survived this kind of injury with no damage to his brain is astounding.” Dr. Johnston hopes those watching the show will take away a message of hope. “This case will always remind me to hang on to hope even during those times when the situation appears hopeless.”

Mr. Creek spent more than a month at University Hospital where he underwent numerous

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operations to prevent infection and had extensive rehabilitation. He lost his vision, but his positive attitude and supportive family have helped him to regain his life as a husband, father and grandfather.

University Hospital is the lead Level I trauma center for a 22-county region of South/Central Texas and treats close to four thousand seriously injured patients every year. Hospitals are verified by the American College of Surgeons as Level I trauma centers after meeting rigorous criteria. Level I trauma centers must have physicians representing all trauma-related medical/surgical specialties available in the hospital 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They must also conduct trauma research to improve survival and outcomes for patients, and actively promote injury prevention. There are just 13 Level I trauma centers in all of Texas. University Hospital, as part of the University Health System, is the only hospital owned by the tax payers of Bexar County. About 25 percent of its total operating budget comes from local property taxes. The remaining 75 percent is funded through patient revenue. University Hospital is also the only San Antonio hospital recognized by U.S.News & World Report in its annual *America's Best Hospitals* issue. University Hospital has received this *Top 50* designation in key medical/surgical specialties for the past seven years. More information can be found at www.UniversityHealthSystem.com.

The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio is the leading research institution in South Texas and one of the major health sciences universities in the world. With an operating budget of \$500 million, the Health Science Center is the chief catalyst for the \$14 billion biosciences and health care industry, the leading sector in San Antonio's economy. The Health Science Center has had an estimated \$34 billion impact on the region since inception and has expanded to six campuses in San Antonio, Laredo, Harlingen and Edinburg. More than 22,000 graduates (physicians, dentists, nurses, scientists and allied health professionals) serve in their fields, including many in Texas. Health Science Center faculty are international leaders in cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, aging, stroke prevention, kidney disease, orthopaedics, research imaging, transplant surgery, psychiatry and clinical neurosciences, pain management, genetics, nursing, allied health, dentistry and many other fields. For more information, click on www.uthscsa.edu.