



# University Health System

**For Immediate Release**

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## **South Texas region named best trauma system in Texas**

*Trauma care providers in Bexar & surrounding counties honored for saving lives, together*

The Southwest Texas Regional Advisory Council for trauma (STRAC) – which includes the trauma hospitals, as well as, the EMS agencies in Bexar and 21 other South Texas counties – was recognized as the 2007 Outstanding RAC by the Texas Department of State Health Services (TDSHS). The award was presented during the 2007 Texas Emergency Medical Services Conference held Nov. 16-21 in Houston.

This is the second time in eight years the STRAC was selected for this award, which recognized the significant efforts and regional influence of South Texas' EMS providers and trauma hospitals working collaboratively to get the right patients to the right hospitals, in the right amount of time.

“We are very honored to receive this important recognition,” said Dr. Ronald Stewart, STRAC chairman and trauma medical director for University Hospital. “I believe this achievement demonstrates the success the STRAC staff has had in building trust and a sense of shared mission between every participant in our trauma system.” The trauma “chain of survival” begins with the first 911 call from the scene of the automobile crash or other injury-causing event, so Stewart says structured cooperation and communication are critical through every patient “hand-off” – from the first responder to EMS, to San Antonio AirLife to one of the region’s three Level I trauma centers.

The STRAC took its mission to a new level this year as it partnered with state agencies to coordinate a comprehensive trauma and disaster preparedness effort that included:

- Mobilizing medical resources as Hurricane Dean approached the Gulf of Mexico
- A coordinated regional medical response to the April 2007 tornado in the Eagle Pass/Piedras Negras area, in which 10 people were killed and dozens injured
- Coordinated responses to wildfires in both Kerr and Bexar Counties

“This award is reflective of the highest standards of trauma system and trauma care available anywhere in the U.S.,” said Col. (Dr.) Donald Jenkins, STRAC vice-chair and

chief of trauma at Wilford Hall Medical Center. “We used the STRAC model when we set up the Balad Air Force theater hospital in Iraq. We called it the Del Rio model, as Del Rio is the furthest place away from the STRAC trauma system and the perfect example of providing the most timely and effective method of care as possible.”

Two STRAC members won individual 2007 Texas EMS Awards. Jack Howley, former director of EMS at Val Verde Regional Medical Center in Del Rio, won EMS Person of the Year. This award honors the EMS person who has demonstrated uncommon leadership and courage in providing emergency medical service to the citizens of Texas. Dudley Wait, director of Schertz EMS, won the Governor’s EMS and Trauma Advisory Council Award, which is given to the person who demonstrates innovative leadership and vision in improving trauma and EMS in Texas.

“The accomplishments of the STRAC are representative of the hard work and commitment of a dynamic group of people who share the same vision; a fully integrated trauma system providing quality trauma care to the region it serves,” said Elizabeth Tracy, Brooke Army Medical Center (BAMC) trauma program manager. “We come to the table representing not only the needs our respective organizations, but also the needs of our communities; urban, rural, frontier, and military, and try to find mutually acceptable solutions that strengthen and support the mission of providing quality trauma care for the region. Sometimes it’s a daunting task, but the STRAC has proven that it can be done.”

Stewart, Jenkins and Tracy, on behalf of the region’s three Level I trauma centers - BAMC, University Hospital and Wilford Hall – are proud to particularly commend STRAC Executive Director Eric Epley, as well as all of the “pre-hospital” trauma care providers throughout the large region, for achieving this significant state-wide recognition.

*The Southwest Texas Regional Advisory Council for Trauma (STRAC) is a nonprofit organization, designated by the State of Texas, to facilitate the development, implementation and operation of a comprehensive trauma care system in Texas Trauma Services Area P. The STRAC aims to improve survival of and outcomes for people who sustain serious injuries as the result of car crashes and other traumatic events.*