

A&M works to improve EMS quality

By GENEEN PIPHER

The Battalion

Texas A&M University Medical Services (TAMU EMS) installed a cutting-edge quality improvement program in July.

The first phase of the program helps TAMU EMS keep more accurate patient charts and records and allows better evaluation of their techniques. The second phase keeps track of incident reports and targets problem areas.

Michael Fraley, chief of the TAMU EMS, said the organization had no formal quality improvement program previously.

"The state just started requiring quality improvement programs just this year as part of our licensing," he said. "Quality improvement is the big trend right now."

Metrocrest Medical Services Inc. is the non-profit organization that provided the program to A&M free of charge.

Fraley said Metrocrest Medical Services had a special interest and understanding of the TAMU EMS needs.

"What is nice about this quality improvement program is that both of the people working on this project were Texas A&M graduates," Fraley said. "They used to work here;

they knew our needs; they knew we needed new equipment."

Although all EMS services in Texas are required by law to have quality improvement programs, David Phillips, quality improvement director and former student, said few services have the resources to assemble a program of this scope and magnitude.

"By concentrating the expertise, research and resources in one place, companies like Metrocrest Medical Services are able to provide a comprehensive, progressive program to EMS services," he said.

He said the program includes the very latest in medical protocols, quality assessment tools and support software.

"This quality improvement program will allow the TAMU EMS to evaluate the performance of their emergency ambulance system very precisely, to accurately document their findings and needs and to effectively direct such interventions as continuing education to improve the service's performance," he said.

Fraley said the new program has made their already good patient care even better.

"This program helps to identify problem areas and trends," he said. "We will be seeing better patient care and better qualified medics.

It was a really good service to begin with, and hopefully it will identify the subtle problems."

Grant Kirby, TAMU EMS paramedic and captain of the training department, said the new program is very beneficial.

"It makes you very self-conscious about the way you write your reports and treat your patients," Kirby said. "The program helps you organize your whole approach to caring for a patient. When you are writing your reports, it is easy to forget the little things, that is, where the program helps—with the subtleties."

Kirby said he can already see a difference in the EMS service.

"I think it has increased our professionalism," he said. "I can already see a change in my patient care."

Fraley said, "We have already seen some drastic changes in the way the medics attend to patients. This provides better patient care by making sure that we do the right thing at the right time."

Most patients will not realize that the program was put into place, Fraley said.

"It probably will not be something a patient will see," he said. "Luckily most of our patients only see us once, but when they do, they will get the best possible care."

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School

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remove them."

But Tate said whether or not the parent is college educated or certified to teach has little effect on the quality of the teaching.

"Certification has never been proven to be of measurable value in education," he said. "In fact, when the results of teaching by certified teacher and uncertified teacher are compared, the results are very heavily in favor of using uncertified teachers."

Dr. Donna Wiseman, associate dean for teacher education in the college of education, said in some instances, learning can be achieved with good individual attention, but certified teachers are more prepared to educate large groups.

"In the area of problem solving, an educated, certified teacher using proven techniques will be far better teaching with large groups," Wiseman said.

But Tate said most states now are accepting or "begging" for non-certified teachers.

In 1988, Houston had more

than 500 non-certified teachers in the classrooms, he said.

Wiseman said most of these non-certified teachers don't stay very long because they are not used to dealing with people of diverse backgrounds and behavior so they become discouraged.

"The only factor guaranteeing success in teaching is the absolute commitment of the teacher to do whatever is necessary for the student to learn the desired subject," Tate said.

Wiseman said, "Parental involvement is a great indicator of school achievement, whether the parents home educate their children or work."

"Parents have the right to educate their children," she said. "My concern is quality control. Some parents are prepared to teach their children and some are not."

Sandy Kibby, legislative consultant for the Texas PTA, said the organization wants more legislative guidelines for home schools and other "non-approved" schools in order to meet the same minimum educational standards as public schools.

Annette Coates, information officer for the Texas State Teachers Association, agreed, and said

there is concern that children in home schools miss "a valuable lesson in socialization" by not going to a traditional school.

"Getting along with people with different backgrounds is as important as academics," she said. "Kindergarten is the melting pot for children."

But Cindy Bodiford, a graduate student in sociology who home schools her children, said the state has no right to put children in public schools to help them get along better.

Not everyone is accepted in public school, which makes it hard for children to get along with each other, Bodiford said.

"Home schooling has had a positive effect on my children because we are fundamentalist Christians, so in public schools my children were outcast," she said.

Tate agreed that adequate socialization does not take place in traditional schools.

Tate said he understands arguments against home schooling, such as many parents believing if a traditional school education was good enough for them, it is good enough for their children.

"Let's face it though, it is not the same school environment," he said.

Research

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He said research is a key mission of the University and the synergy between it and education must go hand-in-hand.

The roundtable discussion consisted of seven areas of importance: priorities, research and education, interdisciplinary studies, patterns of institutional support, community of scholars, new relationships and novel insights.

After the issue is discussed at the group's Aug. 27 meeting, members will prepare a report that will be sent to some of the highest national science authorities.

"The report will go to an important audience on the institutional and national level," Ulrich said.

The forum was sponsored by the National Science Board and Government-University-Industry Research Roundtable. Four other universities participated including Stanford, Yale, Case Western Reserve and the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

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The Battalion (USPS 045-360) is published daily, Monday through Friday during the fall and spring semesters and Monday through Thursday during the summer session (except University holidays and exam periods), at Texas A&M University. Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77840.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Battalion, 230 Reed McDonald Building, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843.

News: The Battalion news department is managed by students at Texas A&M University in the Division of Student Publications, a unit of the Department of Journalism. Editorial offices are in 013 Reed McDonald Building. Newsroom phone number is 845-3313. Fax: 845-2647.

Advertising: For campus, local and national display advertising, call 845-2696. For classified advertising, call 845-0569. Advertising offices are in 015 Reed McDonald and office hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Fax: 845-5408.

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