

25 Years of Trauma Services

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General Message Points

December 15, 2008 marks Los Angeles County trauma system's 25th anniversary.

Nearly 400,000 critically injured trauma patients have been treated in local trauma centers since 1983.

Trauma is the leading cause of death for people between the ages of 1 and 44.

Critically injured trauma patients include those who require immediate life-saving surgical intervention because of major blood loss or shock as a result of vehicular crashes, gunshot or knife wounds, falls, or other violent accidents.

Rather than being transported by ambulance to the nearest emergency room, trauma patients are brought directly to specially designated trauma centers where they receive highly specialized care.

Trauma centers are hospitals that maintain higher levels of service than other community hospitals for victims of car crashes, assaults, falls, and all other types of critical injuries.

An entire team of specialized medical personnel, including a trauma surgeon, is in the hospital prepared to treat life-threatening injuries at a moment's notice.

There are currently 13 trauma centers in the network, making Los Angeles County the largest organized trauma system in the country.

There are two levels of trauma centers (Level I and Level II). While there is no difference in patient care between the two types of trauma centers, Level I centers are usually larger, university-affiliated medical centers that have additional staff and resources such as residency training programs, opportunities for research, and a variety

of medical sub-specialties.

In areas where there is not a nearby trauma center (Antelope Valley and East San Gabriel Valley), there is an air ambulance program in place to transport critically injured patients to a trauma center.

Of the 13 trauma centers, six of them serve as pediatric trauma centers and provide specialized care to critically injured children.

Trauma centers are also very important to disaster response when there are large numbers of seriously injured victims.

Every month, Los Angeles County sees an average of 4 to 5 multi-casualty incidents which result in critically injured patients.

The trauma system saves lives by providing highly specialized care for the most life-threatening injuries.

History of the Trauma System

Los Angeles County's trauma system officially began on December 15, 1983 when the County Board of Supervisors designated the first eight trauma centers.

The impetus for trauma system development began with the National Academy of Sciences/National Research Council's landmark paper entitled "Accidental Death and Disability: The Neglected Disease of Modern Society."

The system grew to a peak in 1985 with a total of 22 designated trauma centers. Since then, the number of trauma centers has settled to our current total of 13.

During the initial period of growth, there were many perceived advantages in seeking trauma center designation such as marketing advantages, prestige, and favorable impact on post-graduate training programs.

However, trauma centers are very costly to function and require enormous resources such as equipment and physicians specialists.

Many trauma centers have closed because of the high levels of uncompensated care for trauma patients.

The decline of trauma centers was finally halted with the implementation of secure trauma catchment areas which helped keep patient numbers high enough for trauma centers to operate and the Board of Supervisors' decision to allocate newly available Proposition 99, tobacco tax monies, to offset the trauma centers' financial losses.

Additionally, the recent stability of the trauma system network is due in part to the voter-approved special parcel tax (called Measure B: Trauma, Emergency and Bioterrorism

Response Assessment) that was approved in 2002. Part of the money that is collected by the property assessment allows the county to maintain and enhance the trauma network.

For the fiscal year 2008-2009, \$269.9 million in expenditures was budgeted for Measure B Funds. County hospitals will receive \$211.4 million, non-county hospitals and physicians will receive \$47.9 million, trauma access through air transport will receive \$4.4 million, public health bioterrorism-related activities will receive \$3.4 million, the EMS Agency will receive \$1.8 million and \$1 million will be allocated to administrative costs.

Though the numbers of trauma centers have declined since 1985, the consolidation of trauma resources may have been instrumental in strengthening our overall system by reducing duplication of service and ensuring that trauma centers have adequate numbers of patients necessary for maintaining high-quality training programs.

The trauma system has proven to be cost effective because it lowers mortality and morbidity rates, decreases permanent disabilities, and decreases the number of productive years lost to society.

Trauma Statistics	1984	2007
Total Patient Volume	15,138	19,481
By Gender	N/A	Male (14,584) vs. Female (4,897)
By Adult/Pediatric	N/A	Adult (17,702) vs Pediatric (1,779)
Top Five Mechanisms of Injury	N/A	Motor Vehicle Crashes (5,039) Falls (4,045) Auto vs. Ped/Bicycle (2,947) Gunshot Wounds (2,366) Motorcycle Crashes (1,339)

First trauma centers designated in 1983:

- Children’s Hospital Los Angeles
- Harbor/UCLA Medical Center
- Huntington Memorial Hospital
- LAC+USC Medical Center
- Long Beach Memorial Medical Center
- Martin Luther King Jr./Charles Drew Medical Center
- Saint Mary Medical Center
- UCLA Medical Center

Current trauma centers:

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|------------------------------------|----------|-------------|
| California Hospital Medical Center | Level II | |
| Children’s Hospital Los Angeles | Level I | PTC Level I |

Cedars-Sinai Medical Center	Level I	PTC Level II
Harbor/UCLA Medical Center	Level I	PTC Level II
Huntington Memorial Hospital	Level II	
Henry Mayo Newhall Memorial Hospital	Level II	
LAC+USC Medial Center	Level I	PTC Level II
Long Beach Memorial Hospital Medical Center	Level II	PTC Level II
Northridge Hospital Medical Center	Level II	
Providence Holy Cross Medical Center	Level II	
Saint Francis Medical Center	Level II	
Saint Mary Medical Center	Level II	
UCLA Medical Center	Level I	PTC Level I