

Trauma program
receives level III
verification from
the American
College of
Surgeons

A LIFESAVING TEAM

BY JOHN BERGGREN

A fall off a rooftop. A crush injury on a farm in Lincoln County. A rollover accident along Interstate 70. The scenarios vary greatly, but the need for immediate access to advanced medical care is the same. For many victims, it can mean the difference between life and death.

Nearly three years ago, Salina Regional Health Center began the process of initiating a specialized trauma service to better meet the needs of severely injured patients in north central Kansas. Earlier this year, the hospital received a level III trauma center verification for its efforts from the American College of Surgeons.

Since the program was implemented at the hospital, a team of individuals with highly defined roles stands by around the clock—ready to descend upon the emergency department whenever a trauma call is received. The team includes a trauma surgeon, an emergency department physician, a trauma nurse, an intensive care nurse, a surgical nurse and staff from radiology,

the laboratory, the blood bank, respiratory care, security and chaplaincy.

“The trauma team is not unlike a pit team in racing,” says trauma surgeon Jake Breeding, MD, medical director for the program. “People can be interchangeable to some extent, but someone changes the tires, someone wipes the windshield and someone checks the oil. It’s the same dynamic here.”

In a trauma room, team members manage the airway and the intravenous lines, perform medical tests, catalog the information and perform other lifesaving interventions.

ONE CALL ACTIVATES THE TEAM

Emergency medical services around the region and doctors in emergency departments throughout north central Kansas have a dedicated line to call Salina Regional for traumatically injured patients. A call sets off a cascade of alerts to trauma team members who report to

a specialized trauma suite in Salina Regional’s emergency department.

“The entire trauma team is there waiting and ready to go to work when we arrive with the patient,” says Shane Pearson, Salina EMS division chief. “Rather than calling people in one by one, they’re there and ready to receive the patient. That saves valuable time getting the patient the care he or she needs.

“This is a huge deal for the community and whole region,” Pearson says. “There’s no doubt in my mind that this level of response is saving lives.”

STATEWIDE INITIATIVE

Salina Regional’s efforts match those of a statewide initiative to have at least a level III trauma center in each geographical region of the state. Levels I and II centers are only available in Wichita, Kansas City and Topeka. They offer a more comprehensive line of services and have more resources to treat victims who have severe injuries that affect multiple systems of the body.

“Not every trauma patient needs to go to a level I center,” says Dwane Beckenhauer, MD, a Salina trauma surgeon. “We have the capabilities to treat many types of injuries in a more timely fashion here in Salina. If all traumas were sent to a level I or II center, those centers would be overwhelmed.”

NEUROSURGERY EXTENDS CAPABILITIES

Salina Regional is the only level III trauma center in the state to offer neurosurgery services. Many traumas, ranging from auto accidents to





seniors on blood thinners who have suffered a fall, require careful management of head injuries. The addition of a third neurosurgeon to the staff later this summer will provide 24/7 access to the specialty when needed.

“It’s an additional asset we have that increases our capacity to keep and treat more patients,” Beckenhauer says. “Neurosurgery gives us the capability to observe and to provide intervention to injuries of the head, neck and spine.”

That means more people in north central Kansas will be able to stay closer to home in order to recuperate from injuries—keeping families closer together during trying circumstances.

Earning a level III trauma center verification has taken a lot of effort by staff members throughout the hospital who have worked diligently to ensure the proper training and processes are in place for when a trauma call comes in.

“This is probably the most difficult accreditation process for a hospital to achieve,” Breeding says. “While this is very rewarding, the work is not over. We will continue to maintain and improve upon what we have accomplished. This is our seal of approval for providing quality trauma care to patients in this region.”



The Salina Regional level III trauma center offers emergency care 24/7.

WHEN TIME IS CRITICAL

Find out more about Salina Regional’s emergency and trauma services at srhc.com. Click “Services,” then “Trauma Center.”

