

San Joaquin General Hospital Advances Rural Trauma Care and Response



There have been numerous incidents in rural California where advanced trauma response training and care would have saved lives. The recent Paradise fires are an example where first responders struggled with rural settings in the attempt to deliver proper and timely emergency medical care.

A team at San Joaquin General Hospital headed by Dinesh Vyas, MD, Director of the Hospital's General Surgery Residency Program in conjunction with Sheela Kapre, MD, SJGH Chief Medical Officer are working on an ambitious plan to properly prepare nearly 30,000 first responders in advanced rural trauma care. This program is implemented in 18 other locations including Rural Texas. In this endeavor a partnership with California Police, volunteer fire, Caltrans and other agencies to improve medical response activities in rural and remote settings.

Recent wildfires, mudslides and the ever possibility of earthquakes show that the need exists for advanced rural medical preparedness. Rural areas in California are defined by population density. A rural area is a location where less than 2,500 people populate a square mile. Rural Californians comprise 5.1 million people within the State's population. Another way to view the volume of rural population is that 13% of California residents live in what can be defined as a rural setting. Rural population is the most vulnerable population and terrains are difficult and disaster times make it harder for outside help to reach in timely fashion.

Rural medical response presents numerous obstacles: Longer transport, limited roadways, limited air transport accessibility and the reality that nearly a dozen Central California hospitals have closed since 2000. The program developed by the San Joaquin General Hospital team is designed to be a self-sustaining program for both large and small scale response teams. The new program is based on a four-tiered system of response and education:

- First responder educational clinic online curriculum
- Acute trauma training
- Broad and advanced trauma care
- Cardiac and specialized trauma analysis

A similar program was developed in Texas with remarkably positive results. While serving at Texas Tech University Healthcare System as Associate Dean, Dept. of Surgery, Dr. Vyas was a developer of rural trauma educational program which has dramatically improved the State of Texas' trauma outcome numbers. This program has also been proven a success internationally. In rural locations throughout India, a team of physicians including Dr. Vyas helped improve pre-hospital trauma care resulting in proven life saving results. The curriculum is internet based allowing anyone or group with online capabilities to receive the specialized training program.