

EDITORIALS & OPINIONS

Focus and hard work pay off for JPS

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A sign of positive changes taking place at Tarrant County's public healthcare system was posted Thursday when JPS Health Network officials proudly announced the hospital system has achieved level I trauma center verification from the American College of Surgeons.

This is a big deal — for the hospital district and for the residents of Tarrant County who deserve the highest level of surgical care possible for patients with traumatic injuries.

Level I centers offer better outcomes with fewer complications.

A 2005 study by the University of Southern California's Keck School of Medicine reported in the *Annals of Surgery* showed that patients treated at level I centers had significantly lower rates of mortality and severe disability at discharge than those at level II centers.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, trauma is the leading cause of death for people under the age of 44, and the leading causes of trauma are motor vehicle accidents, falls and assaults. In Tarrant County, public health data from 2005 indicate that more than 20 percent of deaths that year resulted from some form of trauma.

Hospitals seeking verification from the ACS are assessed by a team of reviewers with extensive experience in trauma care. ACS verification means John Peter Smith Hospital has met the criteria for top-notch trauma care capabilities and performance.

Those include resources to care for patients from injury through rehabilitation; availability of specialists from orthopedics, neurosurgery, cardiothoracic surgery and plastic surgery; and an in-house trauma surgeon available 24/7. A level I center also offers the community a program of research and is a leader in trauma education and injury prevention.

The ACS verification is good for three years.

"Everyone at JPS has been working long and hard at this. I'm excited that they finally got that recognition," Tarrant County Judge Glen Whitley said Thursday.

"This says that we're prepared — as we should be — to handle anything that happens in the county and the surrounding areas. This benefits everybody in the region."

JPS has made significant improvements in the areas of patient care, trauma education and community outreach as a result of its effort to receive the level I designation.

"Level I means better care for all in need of trauma care. That's important because no one knows when and where a trauma might happen," said JPS Health Network President and CEO Robert Earley. "I am proud that JPS is the only level I facility from here to Lubbock."

Public institutions too often are undeservedly underrated by the constituents they serve because folks think government can't do things right.

JPS has weathered rough criticism in recent years, some of it justified, but some was little more than piling on as the new executive team and board members worked to improve the system.

"This is a huge vote of confidence by an external source about the quality of service provided at JPS," said Scott Fisher, chairman of the JPS Health Network board.

"To come in from the outside and take apart the whole service line and say we qualify should enhance