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**TRAUMA BULLETIN**

# What Does a Level 1 Trauma Center Mean for The Valley?

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As a new nurse, I didn't understand what the different levels of trauma meant. I just knew that patient's came into the emergency room (ER), and we did everything we could to take care of them: this was six years ago. As I grew as a nurse, so did my understanding of the trauma system. There were times that a patient had an injury that required a special service to see them, for example, an eye injury, and the specialist wasn't available to see them, so the patient had to be transferred to another hospital, frequently outside the valley.

After three years of working at a Level 3 Trauma Center I was accepted into a trauma nurse fellowship in San Antonio (SA) at a Level 1 Trauma Center. It wasn't until I started working there that I fully understood what it meant to function as a level 1 trauma center. I learned that every patient who came through our doors would receive all the care they needed in one place. There would be no need to transfer to another facility or city. While working at this Level 1 facility, I also learned that we received a large amount of transfer patients from surrounding towns and cities.

One transfer I remember clearly was an older man who had sustained an eye injury while working in his yard. He was flown in by helicopter from Edinburg, Texas. The patient expressed that he was worried about the flight's cost, his wife driving the 4- hour drive alone at night, and where she would stay while he was in the hospital in SA. Although retired, he worked a few days a week at a local business, and he also voiced concern about missing days at work. Had this patients' needs been met by his local hospital in the Rio Grande Valley, he would have forgone the extra expense of transfer and lodging for his wife. Furthermore, the emotional stress he suffered due to the worry he had for his wife's travel and missed work could have been avoided.

To me, a Level 1 Trauma Center in the Rio Grande Valley means that our community can receive all the care they need in one place, without having the extra financial and emotional burden that a transfer causes. Aside from this, a level 1 trauma center also brings many resources to community. Hands on training for emergency medical technicians (EMT's), community education, injury prevention, and a higher level of care for our patients are opportunities that a Level 1 Trauma Center brings. Although it was a sacrifice leaving the Rio Grande Valley, my home, my family, and my friends the experience I gained and have now been able to bring back and apply for the benefit of my community makes it all worth it.

**Diclosures**

MM clinical qualifications: BSN, RN, TCRN. She declares no conflicts of interest.

**References**

No references used in this document.

