

## POLICY INSTITUTE INVITES DISCUSSION OF TRAUMA CARE

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DALLAS, Texas, Feb. 22 -- The University of Texas at Dallas issued the following news release:

UT Dallas' Institute for Urban Policy Research is sponsoring a public dialogue on the potential dangers associated with the limited availability of trauma care in North Texas.

The event is the second in the institute's continuing series of dialogues aimed at spurring public discussion of vital regional issues. It is scheduled for 2 p.m. March 4 at the North Central Texas Council of Governments in Arlington.

The discussion will center on research conducted by the Legacy Center for Public Policy that illustrates a critical need for increased capacity for our region's trauma and burn care systems. The level 1 and level 2 needs of the 19 counties in Service Area E are currently met by only six hospitals located in only two counties.

Legacy, a Dallas-based non-partisan think tank, conducted its research in 2009. The work was compiled by a team of area medical and public policy experts.

Dr. **Timothy Bray**, director of the institute and assistant professor in the School of Economic, Political and Policy Sciences, said public officials and private citizens need to educate themselves about trauma care capabilities in their community. The purpose of the event is to bring attention to these findings and begin identifying solutions.

"This is a starting point that is intended to ignite more discussion of how we need to address the limitations in trauma care," he said.

Currently, there are just six medical helicopters in North Texas. Each can transport just two patients at a time.

"If we had a chemical fire, we could move 12 to hospitals by helicopter," Bray said. "The rest would have to be driven, which could mean a significant delay in receiving critical care."

Because our trauma capacity is so highly concentrated in Dallas and Fort Worth, people injured in more distant neighborhoods of the Metroplex face an even greater challenge. For example, patients facing a one- or two-hour transport time to Parkland Health and Hospital System in Dallas or John Peter Smith Hospital in Fort Worth are more likely to be diverted to a local facility where attempts to stabilize the patient will be made, Bray said.

Physicians point to the "golden hour," the period right after a traumatic injury, as a crucial time for care. The treatment received during that time often determines a patient's prognosis.

"The research suggests you're at a much more serious risk of death or permanent injury if you're injured farther away from Dallas," Bray said.

The dialogue event will begin with a presentation of the research, followed by a panel discussion of the effect this lack of capacity has on the health and quality of life of North Texans. Then members of the audience will have an hour to ask questions and make comments.

"This is an issue of importance to our community," Bray said. "The Institute [for Urban Policy Research] exists to help bring people together to talk about our challenges and possibly work toward figuring out some solutions."

UT Dallas is taking the lead in organizing this public dialogue as part of its effort to be a "good corporate citizen," Bray said. The institute plans to host additional dialogues in coming months addressing other issues that affect the daily lives and health of area citizens.