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SITC Completes Six Years Providing Trauma Care for Central Illinois

Completing its sixth year of operation, the Southern Illinois Trauma Center (SITC) provided treatment to 1,100* injured patients in the last year, who came from Springfield and the 18-county service area. SITC, based at St. John's Hospital since July 1, 2004, now moves July 1 to Memorial Medical Center. [* includes estimates for last two weeks of June 2005]

"In the short time of six years, trauma care in the region has vastly improved," says Dr. John P. Sutyak, SITC's medical director and associate professor of surgery at Southern Illinois University School of Medicine. "This is a continuing story of cooperation in Springfield and throughout our region. Our partner hospitals, EMS providers and other institutions have developed relationships, treatment protocols and transfer practices that put our patients first."

SITC is designated a Level I trauma center by the Illinois Department of Public Health. A partnership of Memorial, St. John's and SIU, it began providing trauma care for west central and southern Illinois in July 1999. The Level I trauma center host site alternates annually between Memorial and St. John's every July 1.

The SITC team uses a combination of six SIU surgery faculty and four local surgeons who provide primary trauma surgery call, including specialists in neurosurgery, ophthalmology, orthopaedics, oral surgery, otolaryngology and plastics. Sutyak became SITC medical director in April 2004. Dr. Christopher D. Wohltmann, assistant professor of surgery, continues on the SITC team.

Over the past year, 239 patients were 55 years or older were treated by the SITC team and 44 were children (11 years and under). The reasons for trauma cases continue with the same patters including nearly half of the injuries resulting from motor vehicle crashes. Falls followed as the next most common category. Other categories include motorcycle, bicycle and pedestrian incidents, stab and gunshot wounds, assaults and all terrain vehicle (ATV) crashes. Most patients continue to be males (70%) and most are between the ages of 20 and 54 (60%).

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About 300 patients are initially evaluated at other institutions before transfer to the SITC for care of complex injuries. The regional system has been developed with active participation from 15 hospitals, including the Level II center in Quincy. About 4,000 emergency medical services (EMS) personnel are part of the system, which covers 10,203 square miles. Protocols and standards are shared at quarterly regional trauma meetings.

While SITC is based at one of the Springfield hospitals, all three partners present education and prevention programs, allowing outreach into the service area. The SIU faculty also provides several trauma training conferences and courses throughout the year.

Trauma centers treat the most serious injuries from which a person may be at risk for loss of life or limb. After providing initial care, the trauma team continues its involvement with the patient in critical care areas and specialized services. Both Memorial and St. John's continue to operate emergency departments as part of the system with seriously, injured patients directed to the SITC Level I designated hospital. Pediatric trauma patients are taken to St. John's because of the pediatric intensive care facility. Burn patients are taken to the Regional Burn Center at Memorial.