



## Treating traumas takes a team effort

Today is a trauma day for Tacoma General.

The Tacoma General Emergency Department is staffed by emergency physicians and nurses, as well as a dedicated surgical team that handles all major traumas, called the Tacoma Trauma Trust.

Tacoma General shares trauma duties with St. Joseph Medical Center. Each morning at 7am, trauma services are rotated between the two hospitals. The designated hospital remains on trauma call for 24 hours.

Traumas can include gunshot wounds and stab wounds, but there's an algorithm and list of criteria used by emergency medical services to determine which patients should be sent to the trauma hospital, says Caesar Ursic, MD, medical director for the Tacoma Trauma Trust.

Both hospitals always have trauma staff managing and caring for patients, he says. But at 7am when the trade-off occurs, the hospital that just ended its trauma day no longer receives trauma patients.

The team that handles traumas consists of a trauma surgeon, a trauma physician's assistant, at least two emergency room nurses and may also include a respiratory therapist, radiology technician, pharmacist, operating room nurse, anesthesiologist and social worker.



A specially designated trauma room is where the team awaits a trauma arrival brought in by EMS. The room is kept a few degrees warmer than others to help with shock.

Dr. Ursic points out the trauma team is just one part of the collection of specialists, physicians and nurses throughout the hospital helping with emergency room patients, who generally only spend a brief amount of time in the emergency department.

"It's definitely a team effort involving many areas of the hospital," he says. "There's a whole team working behind the scenes that makes it possible."

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