

## Change in ownership means new designation

If a hospital changes ownership or physical location, the previously issued DSHS hospital license is no longer valid and any trauma facility designation associated with this license is no longer recognized. In addition, the facility is no longer eligible to receive uncompensated trauma care funding until the facility either achieves trauma facility designation or enters “in active pursuit of designation” (IAP) status. Further, the facility will not be eligible for this funding unless it achieves the trauma facility designation or enters IAP status prior to the deadline of the given year for filing DSHS’s application for uncompensated trauma care funding. Entering a status of “in active pursuit of designation” does not change the facility’s role in the regional trauma system and still may provide eligibility for other state funding.



## NIOSH launches EMS website

National Institutes for Occupational Health and Safety has created a website for EMS personnel with information about occupational injuries. The website has health resources and references for EMS, and data about nonfatal injuries to EMS workers treated in emergency departments. The website is a collaborative project between NIOSH and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Office of Emergency Medical Services. For information, go to [www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/ems](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/ems).

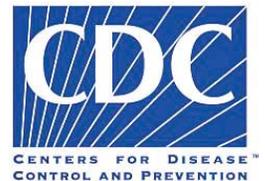
## Houston doctor arrested on fraud charges

The FBI has arrested a Houston doctor, Emmanuel Nwora, MD, on charges of health care fraud related to falsely billing Medicare and Medicaid. Dr. Nwora is currently listed as medical director for four Houston-area EMS providers. He also has served in that capacity for at least seven other agencies that are no longer licensed. The FBI did not mention that any EMS providers are connected to the fraud.

The indictment alleges that Nwora and an associate falsely billed Medicare and Medicaid. According to the indictment, Harris would send unlicensed persons into Medicare beneficiaries’ homes to perform some types of vestibular testing. Vestibular problems are traditionally inner ear problems with the patients reporting chronic dizziness and balance problems. The indictment indicates that patients reported either that none of the testing was performed or that some form of testing was performed but not in the quantity that was actually billed. Each of the 13 counts in the indictment carry as possible punishment up to 10 years in federal prison and a possible \$250,000 fine.

## Americans getting sicker

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that more than one in five middle-aged adults, and half of those over age 65, have more than one chronic health condition, such as hypertension and diabetes. The rate for men and women between ages 45 and 64 has steadily risen in the last ten years. Among those older than 65, 49 percent of men and about 42 percent of women report at least two chronic conditions; those rates have risen about ten percent and seven percent, respectively, in the last ten years. The CDC report blames most of the increases on the rises of three conditions: hypertension, diabetes and cancer.



## Conference goes mobile!

Have you longed for a way to go mobile at the conference? Texas EMS Conference is rolling out Guidebook this year, a free app that will help you keep up with schedules and classes, and will help you navigate your way around the convention center and Austin – all at your fingertips! Watch our website for more details.



## EMS can help in homeless vet initiative



The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has created the Homeless Veterans Initiative to help end the problem of military veterans who become homeless, and EMS personnel are uniquely positioned to help. EMS personnel in urban areas often interact with the homeless population, and in doing so may be able to connect veterans with resources they may need. The Homeless Veterans Initiative is asking EMS personnel to ask patients if they are veterans and if so and they need more than medical help, give them an item with the VA's phone number. Anyone can request cards, brochures, hats, bags, bandanas and many other free items. For more information, go to [www.va.gov/HOMELESS/about\\_the\\_initiative.asp](http://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/about_the_initiative.asp).

## NIH creates Office of Emergency Care Research

To help improve health outcomes of patients who require emergency care, the National Institutes of Health has created a new Office of Emergency Care Research (OCER). The office will be a focal point for emergency care research and training across NIH. Although OECR will not fund grants, it will foster innovation and improvement in emergency care and in the training of future researchers in this field by:



- Coordinating funding opportunities that involve multiple NIH institutes and centers
- Working closely with the NIH Emergency Care Research Working Group, which includes representatives from most NIH institutes and centers
- Organizing scientific meetings to identify new research and training opportunities in the emergency setting
- Catalyzing the development of new funding opportunities
- Informing investigators about funding opportunities in their areas of interest
- Fostering career development for trainees in emergency care research
- Representing NIH in government-wide efforts to improve the nation's emergency care system

The creation of OECR is the culmination of more than five years of discussions between NIH and the emergency medicine community. OECR also responds to reports about the nation's emergency medical system issued in 2006 by the Institute of Medicine.

## Report: Texas leads in fishy home health care claims

Texas produced nearly 40 percent of all questionable home health care billings in the U.S., prompting the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to consider a moratorium on enrolling new providers in the state. Of Texas' 2,212 home health agencies, 45 percent filed questionable claims for Medicare, more than five times the national average. Problems included billing from a hospital and a nursing home for the same patient at the same time and payment for patients who are deceased.

## NAEMSE taking posthumous educator nominations

The National Association of EMS Educators has created an award that posthumously honors individuals who contributed greatly to EMS education but are sadly no longer with us. NAEMSE says it is fitting that the families or loved ones of these educators know that we value their work, which endures. Nominations may be made by any member in the EMS profession except for those members serving on the NAEMSE Recognition Committee. Nominees must have taught for a minimum of seven years and must have been in good standing with all state, national and international regulatory bodies within the EMS profession or retired at the time of their death. For more information, go to [www.naemse.org](http://www.naemse.org).

On Duty

## Grand Prairie chief retires

Clif Nelson, fire chief for the Grand Prairie Fire Department, is retiring in October after 34 years of service, 17 of those years as chief. During Nelson's tenure, the Grand Prairie Fire Department went from a BLS first responder to an ALS engine response department. In the summer of 2000 Chief Nelson took the fire department to an ALS transport level. GPFD now operates six MICU front-line ambulances and three MICU reserve ambulances along with nine paramedic engines responding out of nine fire stations.



## Houston office welcomes new EMS specialist

Amir Nikahd, raised in southwest Houston, began his EMS career in 2008 with Rice University EMS, a first responder collegiate service with volunteers who are also full-time students. In his three years with Rice EMS, he earned the ranks of Special Events Lieutenant and EMS Captain—the highest ranking student position within the organization. In May 2012, Amir graduated from Rice University with a B.A. in kinesiology with minors in business and biochemistry.



## Former hospital tech held in hepatitis outbreak

A former traveling hospital technician has been charged with infecting at least 30 people with hepatitis C, allegedly injecting himself with potent medications intended for patients. David Kwiatkowski, 32, worked in six states before being arrested in New Hampshire, typically working in hospitals for a few months as a temporary employee before leaving. Authorities allege Kwiatkowski would locate a syringe filled with a drug such as the anesthetic Fentanyl, inject himself, then replace the drug with saline to conceal the theft. He would then return the contaminated needle to the hospital cart. Blood tests showed that the virus infecting the patients shared similar genetic similarities with Kwiatkowski's virus.

## Grants available for ECA training

Are you in a rural area that needs more EMS personnel? DSHS has a total of \$50,000 this fiscal year available for EMS training programs, registered first responder organizations (FROs), coordinators and instructors to conduct ECA courses in rural or underserved areas of the state lacking local EMS training resources. Grant funds cover the cost of instruction and textbooks, as well as other expenses, such as supplies. OEMS/TS will accept grant applications on a first-come-first-served basis until the funds run out for the fiscal year. Eligibility requirements for ECAT grants: A minimum of three students; students must agree to perform emergency care attendant services for at least one year with a local emergency medical service provider or first responder organization; services must be provided in a designated rural or underserved area of Texas, as determined by zip code or county; and the course coordinator must be affiliated with an educational program. And give yourself plenty of time: It takes about 12 weeks for an ECAT grant to work its way through the DSHS approval process. For more information, go to [www.dshs.state.tx.us/emstraumasystems/TrainingFunding.shtm](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/emstraumasystems/TrainingFunding.shtm) or contact Haramain Shaikh at (512) 834-6700 ext. 2377 or [haramain.shaikh@dshs.state.tx.us](mailto:haramain.shaikh@dshs.state.tx.us). For a list of all EMS and trauma funding available through DSHS, go to [www.dshs.state.tx.us/emstraumasystems/efunding.shtm](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/emstraumasystems/efunding.shtm).



Recently awarded ECAT:  
**Frio Canyon EMS Inc.**

## DPS launches online drug program

Texas Department of Public Safety has unveiled an online program designed to root out prescription drug abuses by tracking prescriptions of controlled substances such as painkillers. The database, called Prescription Access in Texas, is available to law enforcement personnel, investigators and certain licensed health care professionals such as physicians, dentists, physician assistants, advanced practice nurses and pharmacists. Although there has been a prescription monitoring program at DPS since 1982, that program was limited and slow due to paperwork requirements. The new online program will allow instant access to medications a patient has received anywhere in the state. DPS hopes to identify those patients who are “doctor shopping” and those physicians who illegally provide drugs. Qualified licensed health care professionals may sign up for access at <https://pat.dps.texas.gov/Login.aspx>.



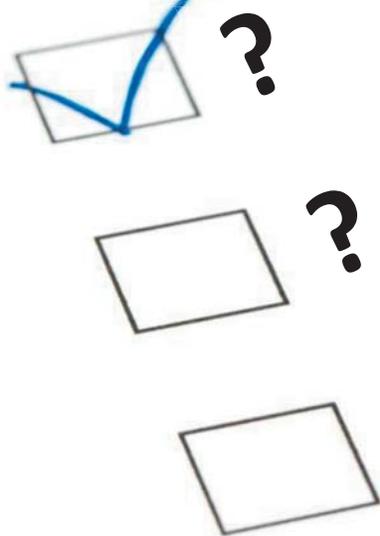
## Emergency funding available

Has your area suffered a devastating event that might qualify you for Extraordinary Emergency Funding? The Extraordinary Emergency Fund is available to assist licensed EMS providers, hospitals and registered first responder organizations if unforeseeable events cause a degradation of service to the community. Situations that may severely reduce or incapacitate emergency response capability are considered extraordinary emergencies. For information, contact Haramain Shaikh at [haramain.shaikh@dshs.state.tx.us](mailto:haramain.shaikh@dshs.state.tx.us) or call 512-834-6700, ext. 2377.

Recently awarded:  
**Willacy County**  
**\$6798.40 for an ambulance engine replacement**

On Duty

## 2012 Texas EMS Awards



Submit your nomination by September 28!

[www.dshs.state.tx.us/emstraumasystems/AwardsIntroduction.shtm](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/emstraumasystems/AwardsIntroduction.shtm)