

from the President



The Texas Medical Center and surrounding areas will soon be bustling with activity, as students of all ages prepare to head back to the classroom. Approximately 16,547 students will descend on the Texas Medical Center campus alone. These scholars are made up of medical and graduate students, interns, residents, postdoctoral candidates, allied health and nursing students, and dental and pharmacy students.

The teaching environment, along with discovery, learning and research activities lead to significant health care advances on almost a daily basis.

Texas Medical Center institu-

tions work collaboratively with other schools and universities in the Houston

community, including the University of Houston campuses, Rice University, Texas Southern University, Texas A&M University and a host of other partnerships that becomes larger each school year. Of particular note is one collaboration, tentatively scheduled for this fall, between the three TMC nursing

schools. The collaboration will provide nursing students with the unique opportunity of learning how to prepare for and handle patients in the wake of a disaster, either natural or man-made.

The Texas Medical Center salutes the educators, researchers and students at the member institutions. The integrated academic programs in the Texas Medical Center make this campus one of the largest learning centers in the world.

Also worth noting is the impending completion of the new John P. McGovern Texas Medical Center Commons building, which will provide a centrally located

facility where students, visitors, employees and volunteers can meet, eat and shop under one roof. The 288,000 square-foot building, located at the intersection of Bertner and Moursund, is within walking distance of most TMC institutions. Amenities include a variety of eateries, an upscale Italian restaurant named Trevisio that will begin accepting reservations Sept. 16, banking facilities and a gift/floral shop. Look for the building's grand opening Sept. 3.

Dr. Richard E. Wainerdi is president of the Texas Medical Center and publisher/editor of the Texas Medical Center News.

Forging New Territory Novel Nursing Curriculum to be Taught in TMC

By KATHLEEN CHARTER
Texas Medical Center News

A cutting-edge nursing curriculum is preparing to make its debut in the Texas Medical Center. The disaster nursing course is the first program under the cooperative agreement signed March 2 last year by The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, Prairie View A&M University and Texas Woman's University colleges of nursing, formalizing a decade of informal collaborations.

Tentatively scheduled for this fall – pending approval by each institution's curriculum committee – this is the first academic course ever developed by a committee comprised of delegates from the three Texas Medical Center nursing schools, and subsequently can be taught at any of the participating schools.

A multi-institutional committee, chaired by Frank Cole, Ph.D., a registered nurse and nursing professor at the UT-Houston School of Nursing, has met for nearly a year to organize this course. Other committee members include Shirley Hutchinson, Dr. P.H., TWU associate nursing professor; Francine Nelson, Ph.D., UT-Houston assistant nursing professor; Elsa Tansey, Dr. P.H., PVAMU baccalaureate nursing program director; Marge Prydum, Ph.D., TWU assistant nursing professor; Elda Ramirez, M.S.N., UT-Houston assistant nursing professor; Habiba Sulemana, PVAMU doctoral candidate and nursing instructor; Tony Rosales, UT-Houston emergency care graduate student; Sandra Cesario, Ph.D., TWU assistant nursing professor; and Ruth Grubecic, M.S., TWU clinical nursing instructor.

"Frank is head of our emergency nurse practitioner program, and so he is a natural leader for this group," said Patricia Starck, D.S.N., John P. McGovern

Distinguished Professor and dean of The University of Texas School of Nursing at Houston. "Following Tropical Storm Allison, our school hosted a conference to discuss the disaster, nurses' roles, and what we learned from it. Then came Sept. 11, and it became obvious that we all needed to get more of this content into our curriculum."

The three school deans decided rather than developing their own courses, they would put a group of their best experts together to develop one course for all three schools to utilize.

"We wanted to come together to do one big, good thing," Starck said.

"The cooperation of our three nursing schools in training disaster-care nurses is unique in the country and demonstrates

exceptional leadership," said Richard Wainerdi, Ph.D., Texas Medical Center president and CEO. "As the Texas Medical Center pursues disaster preparation, both man-made and natural, the nursing component is integral in our success."

Carolyn Gunning, Ph.D., TWU College of Nursing dean, said the concept of collaboration presents a great opportunity for student and community nurses.

"With the severity of recent world events, it is an opportune time to implement this course," she said.

Betty Adams, PVAMU College of Nursing dean, concurs.

"We are right on target with this course. Current students and graduates will be ready to meet the challenges that our global society faces," she said.

The one-semester course aims to give students the initial skills needed to prepare for disasters, and a resource manual is being developed to supplement the course. Should students want to pursue the topic further, independent study courses can be set up. However, if a significant student and community interest is shown, the course can be expanded to accommodate the demand.

Topics covered in the course and manual include:

- how to respond to natural and man-made disasters;
- patient assessment and management issues;
- basic first aid, including fracture

(See "Curriculum" page 17)

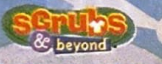


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Curriculum

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splinting, wound care and immobilization;

- first-responder issues, including victim assessment;
- triage;
- defining what constitutes natural and man-made disasters, mass casualties, and major medical incidents;
- disaster planning and the essential elements involved in a plan, including activation, implementation, mitigation, communication, and recovery, among others; and
- an overview of federal disaster agencies, including the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the National Disaster Medical System and the Disaster Medical Assistance Team.

The materials will be taught in various formats, including lectures, presentations from participants who've been involved in disasters, panel discussions, and staging a mock disaster where students can practice assessing actor "patients."

"Ideally, this course would be required of every student," Cole said, "but for now it is being planned as an elective."

"We're hoping faculty members will pick up the resource manual and integrate some of the content into regular coursework," Starck added.

One of the course challenges is equipping students with the information necessary to care for patients during a disaster, because unlike taking vital signs, not every hospital's procedure is universal.

"You have to follow the disaster policy of the hospital in which you're working," Cole said. "None of the hospitals are the same. We can teach the principles and processes, but we can't teach policies and procedures."

Another challenge has been to find a common time among the three schools when the class can meet.

"The deans have worked very well together in accomplishing what we set out to do," Starck said. "We're all learning from each other and uncovering a lot of logistical problems, such as the different semester and vacation dates for the different schools."

Starck said the disaster topic has come full circle for her. During her first year of teaching, in the era of bomb shelters and nuclear and chemical warfare, she taught a disaster nursing course.

"Now that this has resurfaced, I wish I'd kept my materials," she said. "A lot of it is still applicable today, such as chemical antidotes." ■

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