University of Rochester Launches iTraining for Emergency Responders

ROCHESTER, N.Y. -- When an emergency squad pulls up to the home of an elderly person in distress in upstate New York, chances are the paramedics have received a new brand of high-tech training using a video podcast, developed by the University of Rochester Medical Center (see also University of Rochester Medical Center).

The institution is the first in the nation to train emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and paramedics with video podcast lessons downloadable onto iPods or computers. The University hopes to serve as a model for other institutions seeking to make continuing education more compelling and convenient. To view the training program, go to http://www.rochesterems.org/.

"When we talked to a number of emergency providers, they all asked for more 'on-demand' training, so we set out to design something that would be truly useful," said Manish N. Shah, M.D., M.P.H., an emergency medicine physician and chief of the Division of Pre-hospital Medicine at URMC, who led the program development. "With a video podcast, they can sit in their ambulance or base between calls and learn new skills."

Although any paramedic in the country can access and learn from the program, the approximately 12,800 emergency personnel in New York State can earn CME credit by viewing the video and taking the quiz online.

Shah has a special interest in geriatrics, and serves as the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) director for the Monroe County-Livingston County region. Therefore, the pioneering sessions address some of the special challenges of caring for older adults, such as communicating with the elderly, being alert for harmful medication interactions, and end-of-life issues.

"Caring for a 21-year-old accident victim is much different than caring for a frail, older person," Shah said. "And given the demographic trends in the country and in the Rochester region, it is imperative that EMS providers deliver quality care to this segment of the population."

In fact, 40 percent of emergency calls are for geriatric patients, although emergency responders only receive one or two hours of mandatory training geared toward the older adult, Shah said.

The Finger Lakes Geriatrics Education Center was a partner in the program. Lars-Kristofer Peterson, a third-year medical student, was executive producer of the video podcasts. The federal Health Resources and Services Administration funded the project, through a grant to principal investigator Paul R. Katz, M.D., chief of the Division of Geriatrics and Aging at URMC.

One of the nation's top academic medical centers, the University of Rochester Medical Center (http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/) forms the centerpiece of the University's health research, teaching, patient care, and community outreach missions. The Medical Center receives more than $230 million in external research funding per year, and the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry ranks in the top one-quarter of U.S. medical centers in federal research funding. The University's health care delivery network is anchored by Strong Memorial
Hospital - a 739-bed, University-owned teaching hospital. As upstate New York's premier health care delivery network, patients benefit from the Medical Center's robust teaching and biomedical research programs.