



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 14, 2011

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WMC EMS first in Middle Tennessee to provide life-saving video laryngoscopy

Williamson Medical Center paramedic and field training officer Sean Bardo, left, trains co-workers Michael Campbell, EMT-IV, and paramedic Heather Fowler on how to assist while the advanced video laryngoscopy is being performed.

FRANKLIN, TENN. Emergency Medical Services at Williamson Medical Center recently began using another piece of state-of-the-art technology, becoming one of the first ground EMS systems in the state to take this life-saving intubation equipment to critical patients in the field.

The GlideScope® advanced video laryngoscope is used to place a tube in a patient's airway to aid in breathing. For decades, paramedic personnel have had the ability to intubate patients manually, but many times extreme circumstances and difficult airways prevented successful placement. The GlideScope, equipped with a small, high-definition digital video camera and portable monitor, provides a consistently clear, real-time view of the airway and tube placement, enabling rapid and successful intubation.

Often in emergency settings, for a variety of reasons, patients will have difficult or



unpredictable airway complications, and it's almost impossible to place an endotracheal tube," says Michael Wallace, C.C.P.M., Williamson Medical Center EMS clinical services manager. "Managing difficult airways in the field often can be exponentially more challenging because of environmental factors and physiological complications, so equipping our EMS personnel with this advanced technology greatly enhances their chances of success."

EMS deployed its two new GlideScope instruments in supervisory vehicles, which respond along with ambulances to 911 calls for critical patients. While daily use is not anticipated, the tools were used three times in the first 48 hours of deployment to successfully intubate truly difficult airway patients that could not be accomplished by traditional means.

"With a list price of nearly \$20,000 each, these cases reassured us with evidence that we made the right purchase," Wallace says. "To the best of our knowledge, outside of air medical services, our EMS system is the first in Middle Tennessee and one of only five ground-based systems across the state using the GlideScope technology. Video laryngoscopy in the field is revolutionizing emergency airway management, and devices like this are quickly becoming the standard of care for EMS."

Recognized as one of the top programs in the state, Williamson Medical Center's EMS Department constantly strives toward industry-best practices with response times equal to or better than the national average. Members of the community-focused department stay abreast of the latest emergency trends and evidence-based practices, and they undergo more than triple the state's mandatory training requirements, often serving as instructors themselves at both state and national levels. WMC's EMS holds the highest rating possible from the state Department of Health, and its protocols have been used as examples for other emergency medical service providers.

Before deploying the GlideScopes, all EMS supervisory staff received specialized training in the Vanderbilt Department of Emergency Medicine Airway Laboratory. The training was led by Kevin High, R.N., trauma program manager/associate in Emergency Medicine at Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

Additional features of the GlideScope include digitally recording the intubation in real time, so the procedure can be attached to the patient's electronic medical record. Wallace says the device also is especially valuable for trauma patients.

"The paramedic no longer requires a direct line of sight for visualization of the airway, and

therefore there is no need to manipulate the head, which is safer and less traumatic for a patient who may have a head, neck or spine injury," he says.

Video laryngoscopy is used widely in hospitals, primarily by anesthesiologists in operating rooms. The two EMS GlideScopes, as well as one each for WMC's Emergency Department and Critical Care Unit, were purchased for the hospital by the Williamson Medical Center Volunteer Auxiliary.

Other state-of-the-art capabilities performed by Williamson Medical Center's EMS:

- EMS performs diagnostic 12-lead EKGs in the field and transmits them to the receiving facility in order to facilitate rapid intervention of cardiac events.
- Williamson Medical Center's EMS was one of the first in the state to implement Continuous Positive Airway Pressure to treat patients who are experiencing severe respiratory distress. Studies of early CPAP intervention have clearly shown improved patient outcomes and decreased hospitalization.
- In the last year, EMS added EZ-IO devices to its ambulances. These instruments allow paramedics to achieve central line quality access to critical patients in which traditional IV access is not easily achievable. The EZ-IO, purchased by WMC's Volunteer Auxiliary, has revolutionized paramedics' ability to intervene with appropriate fluids and medications within seconds in cases of profound shock associated with illness or injury and during cardiac arrest.
- In another example of cutting-edge advancement in the EMS field, WMC's paramedics now have the capability to administer certain medications via the intranasal route. In many cases, intranasal administration can decrease pain and anxiety, increase patient and provider safety, and improve patient outcomes.

Williamson Medical Center EMS strategically deploys 11 advanced life support ambulances throughout the county based on geography, response times and call volume. With a staff of nearly 100 paramedics, EMTs and support personnel, the department serves as the county's primary 911 emergency medical provider. As the lead agency, WMC EMS is tasked with the training, credentialing and oversight of approximately 400 fire-department-based medical responders throughout the various cities and jurisdictions in the county.

Williamson Medical Center, a 185-bed hospital fully accredited by The Joint Commission, provides comprehensive inpatient and outpatient care including emergency services, with credentialed physicians in 53 specialties and sub-specialties. The community-focused hospital offers a wide range of wellness services, screenings and classes. For more information about Williamson Medical Center, visit www.williamsonmedicalcenter.org.

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