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Savvik Says Q&A Leads to Quality Assurance

Erlanger Health System in Chattanooga, TN. is a nationally-acclaimed, multi-hospital health system known for its academic medical center. Every year, more than 600,000 people are treated by the team of healthcare professionals who are part of Erlanger.

Erlanger is the 7th largest public hospital in the United States treating adults and children, and is the tri-state region's only Level I Trauma Center.

As part of the Vanderbilt Health Affiliated Network that includes 56 hospitals with 4,000 participating physicians and clinicians, Erlanger has six LIFE FORCE air ambulances in its fleet, two based in Tennessee, two in North Georgia, one in North Carolina, and one in Winchester, TN.

According to Robbie Tester, Vice President of Operations, Erlanger Health System Life Force Division, dedication to improvement and quality assurance are keys to running a high-performance air medical program.

With quality assurance top of mind, the Erlanger Life Force performs six to eight flights per day and receives approximately 5,000 plus requests yearly. The helicopters are a sophisticated equivalent to a hospital ICU and is attributed for being the first air medical program to transport blood in its area. Critical patient care is provided by a critical care paramedic and a critical care nurse. One hundred percent of charts are peer reviewed which includes questions pertaining to the helicopter base's accuracy of charting, as well as if standards on items like sedation and intubation were effectively executed.

“The air medical industry is constantly decreasing the mortality rate and not just focused on the transport,” said Tester. “We are responding with medical and scientific assistance to change the recovery outcome and build awareness in communities.”

Tester restates that quality assurance is vital to carry out a multi-disciplinary plan of continuum care. Monthly meetings serve as a report card review regarding time spent on scene, dissecting critical care improvement possibilities like lab analysis results, and response outcomes.

“Quality assurance can constantly be improved,” said Tester. “But it also creates the truest accountability standard.”