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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

*Memorial Health System of East Texas  
Utilizing Technology for Patient Safety*

**LUFKIN, TEXAS (March 15, 2010)**...With the ability to research and choose the best health care options, Americans are looking toward health care organizations that not only are utilizing technologically advanced equipment and procedures but also are centered on the patient's care and safety. Memorial Health System of East Texas is recognizing patient safety week, by raising safety awareness in the community.

As a Joint Commission Accredited Health Care Organization, Memorial Health System of East Texas monitors many factors that come together to provide a safe patient experience. Some of the most recognized patient safety goals are listed as:

- Accuracy of patient identification
- Effectiveness of communication among caregivers
- Safety of using medications
- Reduce the risk of health care-associated infections
- Accurately and completely reconcile medications across the continuum of care
- Reduce the risk of patient harm resulting from falls
- Prevent health care-associated pressure ulcers
- The organization identifies safety risks inherent in its patient population

Memorial Health System of East Texas leads the way with implementation of many patient safety components. Patient identifiers, from verbal communication with the patient to scanning the patient's coded armband, give nurses and patient care technicians the confirmation of appropriate patient care.

Secure electronic medical records (EMR) give physicians and health care workers the ability to communicate by retrieving patient information on demand. With EMR, paper charts no longer need to follow the patient from one area of the hospital to another. As a combination computer system and medication cart, the Workstation on Wheels allows inputting of patient information at the bedside. This EMR technology gives physicians access to patient's medical records from any location within the hospital, their office or home. Communication at this level allows the physician to see what's happening with the patient while discussing treatment with nursing staff or other physicians.

“With the use of the EMR, we are able to provide up-to-date, real time information for physicians and patients,” stated Jeannie Ferguson, Director of Medical Records at Memorial Health System of East Texas. “Our team works very hard to make sure records are updated regularly so that physicians can make the best decisions regarding our patients care.”

Tracking all patient medications and personal information through a simple bracelet and bar coding assures patients are receiving the right medications, proper dosage, appropriate form (whether injection or oral) as scheduled. Electronic Medication Administration Record (eMAR) technology is designed to immediately provide patient care information to physicians and nurses while lowering the risk of medication errors.

Automatic medication dispensing machines located on patient floors require all medications to be bar coded. When medications are bar coded, they are checked and verified again by the staff to make sure the right bar code was printed on the appropriate medication. Combined with bar coded armbands, bar coded medications, and safety checks within the eMAR and bar coding software, the safety technology alerts the nurse of a potential medication conflict before a patient is given the medication. If a discrepancy is detected, the system will not allow the nurse to continue with the administration of the requested drug.

“This technology helps lower the risk of medication errors while making a patient’s medication record readily available to physicians and nurses,” said Kathy Griffin, Director of Pharmaceutical Services at Memorial.

Implementation is under way for the next stage of electronic medical records. Computerized Physician Order Entry (CPOE) will give doctors and nurses the ability to enter all patient orders electronically. By replacing paper orders, CPOE will minimize transcription errors. Physicians can view patient records, order and evaluate diagnostic testing and much more via a secured network from their office or a remote computer.

“Implementation of CPOE is being increasingly encouraged as an important solution to the challenge of reducing medical errors, and improving health care quality and efficiency,” stated Mario Estrella, Vice President of Patient Services.

While advanced technology such as electronic medical records and medication bar coding help keep patients safe, reducing the risk of patient infection comes from technological advances, hand washing and following proven protocols.

Pressure ulcers (bed sores) are caused from constant pressure on an area of skin reducing blood flow to that area which, overtime, can cause the skin to breakdown and form an open sore. Memorial Health System of East Texas Patient Care Services participates in the Pressure Ulcer Prevention Program (P.U.P.P.) in an effort to promote patient safety and wellbeing. Along with using appropriate skin care products, Intensive Care and Progressive Care patient beds automatically adjust to different levels alleviating constant pressure to only one area of the body.

“The program involves everything from nutrition to hygiene,” said Cheryl Bennett, RN, Quality Improvement Coordinator for Memorial Specialty Hospital. “The basic core of the curriculum is risk factors, assessments, skin care, turning on a scheduled basis, incontinence care, nutrition, and documentation. For example, keeping the skin moisturized and intact by proper bathing and applying products in the proper order are a way to decrease the risk of skin breakdown.”

Memorial Health System of East Texas is committed to excellence and a very significant part of that excellence is patient safety. It is important that patients understand and take part in their care during their hospital stay. A patient or their family's involvement in the healing process along with the latest in patient safety technology, can result in a quicker recovery and a positive hospital experience.

### **About Memorial Health System of East Texas**

As the largest health care system in the deep East Texas area, Memorial Health System of East Texas is a private, not-for-profit hospital that provides care to almost a quarter of a million patients each year. Since its inception in 1949, Memorial Health System has paved the way for quality, innovative health care in East Texas. In fact, Memorial consistently ranks among the nation's best for exceptional health care and patient satisfaction.

Memorial Health System of East Texas is comprised of four hospitals—Memorial Medical Center—Lufkin, Memorial Medical Center—Livingston, Memorial Medical Center—San Augustine, and Memorial Specialty Hospital, the only rural long-term acute care facility within the area. Memorial offers a wide array of services, including the newly renovated Arthur Temple, Sr. Regional Cancer Center, which has earned a three-year seal of approval with commendation from the Commission on Cancer. Additionally, Memorial is a regional cardiac care center affiliated with the Methodist-DeBakey Heart Center in Houston. The hospital also is known for providing the area's only comprehensive diabetes center—The Horace C. Polk Regional Diabetes Center. Other centers of excellence include the Temple Imaging Center that offers some of the most advanced procedures in the area, including PET/CT scanning for cancer and Alzheimer's, 64 Slice CT scanning, Open Bore MRI, 4D Ultrasound, and digital mammography. Other specialty areas include Orthopedic care, Women's Services, Inpatient and Outpatient Rehabilitation, Homecare, Wound and Hyperbaric Therapy, Kidney & Diabetes Treatment, Sleep Disorders Treatment, and Express Lab. Memorial Health System of East Texas—founded and funded by the people it serves.

### **Cutline:**

Memorial Health System of East Texas is recognizing patient safety week, by raising safety awareness in the community. As a Joint Commission Accredited Health Care Organization, Memorial Health System of East Texas monitors many factors that come together to provide a safe patient experience. Secure electronic medical records (EMR), medication bar coding and tracking and electronic physician order entry insures patient safety by linking information through an electronic monitoring system. Confirming the proper medication is administered to the patient, Misti Lowe, RN, scans Paula Jefferys' bar coded armband prior to giving her prescribed medications.