



Healthcare Council Features Project ETHAN (Emergency TeleHealth and Navigation)

The Partnership held its quarterly Healthcare Council on July 28 in the Partnership board room. Leslie Ferrell, Regional Business Development Manager, Acadian Ambulance welcomed Dr. Michael G. Gonzalez, Associate Medical Director and Director, Project ETHAN at the Houston Fire Department/EMS.

Gonzalez discussed Project ETHAN (Emergency TeleHealth and Navigation), a partnership between the Houston Fire Department and fourteen community organizations to ensure patients who call 911 get appropriate care at the right time and the right location while ensuring the safety of the community. Houston Fire Department/EMS is the largest fire-based EMS in the United States, with over 500,000 EMS calls per year, averaging 1,000 calls and over 400 ambulance transports per day. Many of the calls are not serious emergencies and do not require transport via ambulance. Project ETHAN allows the patient to speak directly with a physician via a tablet device, after having been assessed on-site by EMS personnel as an appropriate consumer. The goal of Project ETHAN is to reduce the stress on emergency response resources by diverting non-emergency patients to other, less cost intensive resources.

In consultation with the physician, the patient may be given one of several options: transport by taxi to an appointment at a nearby federally qualified healthcare clinic; a clinic appointment by a personally owned vehicle; home care; transport to the emergency room via ambulance; or transport to the emergency room via taxi. Within 24 hours, Care Houston, an established program with the Houston Department of Health and Human Services, follows up with the patient providing health navigation to see what other services the patient may need.

Project ETHAN was fully deployed across the city of Houston in December 2014 with every firefighter having the ability to access and utilize the program. Due to rising demand, it is now available Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. – 10 p.m., most weekends and most holidays.

The next Healthcare Council is October 13, 2015.