



Introduction

During the Sacramento County Trauma Center appeal process, the issue of trauma charges and costs were raised with several statements that they are higher or the highest in Northern California. A separate question and answer report will probe more on the issue of trauma costs. This report analyzes trauma center charges which are publically reported.

Level I and II Trauma Center Charge Comparison

There are 46 Level I and II trauma centers in California. All of the trauma centers except for one have trauma charges listed on their charge master that are reported to the Office of Statewide Planning and Development (OSHPD). Several of these trauma centers list only one fee for trauma activation, while the majority of these centers have multiple charges for different levels of trauma activation and care.

The highest trauma charges for emergency department care at the highest acuity level among Level I and II trauma centers in California were at Mercy Medical Center in Redding and Enloe Medical Center in Chico, with charges of \$29,965 and \$25,405 respectively. Both of these trauma centers are located in the EMS agency region: Northern California EMS Region. The lowest trauma charges for apparently the same patients were seen at Harbor UCLA Medical Center, Desert Regional Medical Center in Palm Springs, St. Francis Medical Center in Lynwood, and Western Medical Center in Santa Ana, with top trauma charges of \$250, \$250, \$7,200, and \$7,300, respectively.

There are two trauma centers in Sacramento County, a Level I trauma center at UC Davis Medical Center and a Level II trauma center at Mercy San Juan Medical Center. The top trauma charge at UC Davis is \$13,947; at Mercy San Juan it is \$17,600. These charges are greater than the Level I and II trauma center average, existing in the top fifth (UC Davis) and the top third (Mercy San Juan. UC Davis ranks 13<sup>th</sup> highest (e.g. 32 trauma center charges are lower) and Mercy San Juan ranks 8<sup>th</sup> (e.g. 37 trauma center charges are lower). However, other charges for ED visits at these facilities are some of the highest among all trauma centers in the state. For example, the charge for a level five ED visit is \$5,734.50 at UC Davis and \$2,713.34 at Mercy San Juan. These charges would likely be added to the trauma charge.

There are five Level I and II trauma centers with just one trauma activation charge level in California. Of these, the lowest trauma charge is \$250.00 at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center. The highest charge is \$15,020.00 at Regional Medical Center of San Jose. The average trauma charge at these five trauma centers is \$8,615.67.

Level I & II Trauma Centers with One Level Trauma Charge		
Lowest	Highest	Average
\$250.00	\$15,020.00	\$8,615.67

Source: OSHPD Hospital Chargemaster, 2007

Seventeen Level I and II trauma centers in California have two levels of trauma activation charges. Mercy San Juan Medical Center and UC Davis Medical Center, both located in Sacramento County, are included in these ten trauma centers. Looking at the lower-level trauma charge, charges range from \$1,078.90 at Palomar Medical Center to \$16,957 at Scripps Mercy Medical Center. The average lower-level charge at hospitals with two trauma charge





levels is \$6110.22. The higher level charge ranges from \$2,694.90 to \$19,227.40. Again Palomar Medical Center has the lowest charge and Scripps Mercy has the highest charge. The average charge is \$9,840.03.

Level I & II Trauma Centers with Two Level Trauma Charges					
	Lowest	Highest	Average	UC Davis	Mercy San Juan
Low Charge	\$1,078.90	\$16,957.60	\$6,110.22	\$9,273.00	\$13,440.00
High Charge	\$2,694.90	\$19,227.40	\$9,840.03	\$13,947.00	\$17,600.00

Source: OSHPD Hospital Chargemaster, 2007

Twenty-three of California’s Level I and II trauma centers have three charge levels for trauma charges. The lowest charges for each trauma activation level are at Desert Regional Medical Center. Desert Regional Medical Center has a charge of \$50 for a small trauma team activation, \$150 for a partial trauma team activation, and \$250 for a full trauma team activation. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the highest charges are \$9,004.01 for a low-level trauma activation, \$23,878.00 for a medium trauma activation, and \$29,965.36 for a high-level trauma activation. Each of these high trauma charges are at Mercy Medical Center in Redding. Average trauma charges at these hospitals are \$4,043.88 for a low-level visit, \$9,638.95 for a medium level visit, and \$14,108.51 for a high-level visit.

Level I & II Trauma Centers with Three Level Trauma Charges			
	Lowest	Highest	Average
Low Charge	\$50.00	\$9,004.01	\$4,043.88
Medium Charge	\$150.00	\$23,878.00	\$9,638.95
High Charge	\$250.00	\$29,965.36	\$14,108.51

Source: OSHPD Hospital Chargemaster, 2007

Summary

Statewide there is great variation among trauma charges at Level I and II trauma centers with Sacramento County having some of the highest but not the highest trauma charges in the state. The variation does not appear to be due to regional factors, as there are substantial differences in the charges at hospitals within the same region as well.

