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Woodland Heights Medical Center offers new therapy equipment and techniques

Lufkin, TX, (March 23, 2011) – Woodland Heights Medical Center now offers a more specialized technique in the treatment of dysphagia, which is difficulty or the inability to swallow.

The hospital recently acquired the VitalStim® Therapy System. This system is a non-invasive, external electrical stimulation therapy to be used in conjunction with traditional swallowing therapy.

The inability to swallow affects some 15 million Americans and can often occur as a result of a neurological disorder or event, such as stroke, Parkinson's disease or ALS; head and neck cancer; or de-conditioning as a result of age. The effects of dysphagia can also be quite serious:

- Aspiration or choking
- Pneumonia
- Chronic malnutrition
- Life-threatening dehydration
- Increased rate of infection
- Longer hospital stays

“Eating and socialization go hand in hand. Not being able to eat leads to isolation, depression, and malnutrition. This new equipment will help patients regain quality of life,” states Nichole Chala, MSPT, Director of Therapy Services at Woodland Heights.

This successful therapy system is both safe and effective for patients and has helped them achieve sustained improvement and long-term results.

“It can be painful watching your child grow up not being able to eat, and having to rely on a feeding tube. Fortunately, VitalStim® is a proven technique available to help infants and children learn how to swallow, providing them with the ability to eat,” adds Chala.

Woodland Heights Medical Center is dedicated to providing the best possible care and service to the community we serve. The new VitalStim® Therapy System is just one of the many ways our caring and compassionate team of highly trained healthcare professionals make each patient's experience exceptional. To learn more about Woodland Heights Medical Center, visit us online at www.woodlandheights.net.

About Woodland Heights Medical Center

Established in 1918, Woodland Heights Medical Center was Lufkin's first hospital. Now, nine decades later, Woodland Heights is recognized throughout Deep East Texas as the leading provider of high quality, innovative health care services. Accommodating a wide range of clinical specialties, Woodland Heights has achieved excellence in key medical and surgical areas including cardiology, pulmonology, neurology, orthopedic surgery, physical medicine/rehabilitation, vascular surgery and obstetrics and gynecology. Woodland Heights also offers a full range of outpatient diagnostic services including advanced imaging, laboratory, outpatient surgery and emergency services. Through its Rehabilitation Center, Woodland Heights offers cardiac rehabilitation, stroke recovery and physical and occupational rehabilitation. Combining modern facilities, leading technology, an exceptional staff and a commitment to the communities it serves, Woodland Heights Medical Center remains at the forefront of quality health care in Deep East Texas.

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Pictured are Speech Language Pathologists Karla Ashabranner, Joi Ham and Jennifer Peikert.