

U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords Remains in Critical Condition; five others are in serious condition; two patients are in good condition and two patients have been discharged

January 10, 2011

Contact: AHSC Office of Public Affairs, (520) 694-6000

TUCSON, Ariz.— University Medical Center has discharged two patients who were hospitalized at the Trauma Center at University Medical Center (UMC) following the shooting tragedy that occurred on Jan. 8. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords remains in critical condition in the ICU. Five other patients are in serious condition. Two patients are in good condition.

Rainer Gruessner, MD, head of the University of Arizona College of Medicine Department of Surgery, praised the great work of the trauma team at UMC in Tucson and said when the tragedy happened, “we were ready and we were able to deliver in a way that is going to make our community and the state proud.”

G. Michael Lemole Jr., MD, a leading authority on skull base surgery and section chief of neurosurgery at the UA Department of Surgery, who performed surgery on Rep. Giffords with Martin Weinand, MD, professor of surgery in the neurosurgery section, remains cautiously optimistic about Rep. Giffords’ recovery.

“At this time, no change is good, and we have no change,” Dr. Lemole said.

Rep. Giffords still is following simple commands, such as, “can you wiggle your toes” or “can you raise two fingers.” Additionally, CT scans show no progression of swelling in her brain. Dr. Lemole stressed that swelling can sometimes take three to five days to maximize, “but every day that goes by makes us slightly more optimistic.”

Peter Rhee, MD, MPH, medical director of UMC’s Trauma and Critical Care and professor of surgery at the UA College of Medicine Department of Surgery, stressed that trauma care focuses on the person and the patient as a whole. Once the trauma team has initially treated the patients’ physical injuries, emotional healing becomes a focus.

“This is a time when emotional issues are very important for us,” he said.

Dr. Rhee said that a highly skilled and compassionate team of in-house psychiatrists and social workers will work with patients to combat post traumatic stress syndrome, or PTSD. Patients, their family members and UMC staff will also have access to the resources of the Pima County Attorney’s Victim Services Division.

“It’s vitally important that we take care of these patients through the full spectrum of trauma care,” Dr. Rhee said.