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In the News

Rhode Island Hospital Receives \$2 Million Grant to Continue to Reduce Teens' Dangerous Driving November 1, 2007

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An innovative program targeting Rhode Island teenagers who exhibit dangerous driving will continue thanks to a \$2 million grant awarded from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to researchers at Rhode Island Hospital's Injury Prevention Center.

Reducing Youthful Dangerous Driving (RYDD) is a court-mandated program for teen traffic offenders (ages 16 to 20) that aims to reduce high-risk driving through motivational counseling and volunteering opportunities. The intervention program applies a unique approach to dealing with young drivers risky behaviors.

"The problem in Rhode Island is clear—teens frequently engage in dangerous and risky driving, including driving under the influence of alcohol and other drugs," says Ted Nirenberg, Ph.D., director of RYDD at Rhode Island Hospital, associate professor at Brown University and a clinical psychologist. "However, our program has shown excellent promise in helping local teens identify their risky actions and make subsequent changes in their driving behavior."

Since RYDD was established in 2001, more than 800 adolescents have completed the program with impressive results. Overall, researchers report:

- A significant decrease in total re-convictions, including alcohol-related re-convictions, in the 12 months after completion of the program.
- A reduction of driving while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- A decline in overall alcohol consumption, binge drinking, and alcohol-related negative consequences.
- Increased seatbelt use.

RYDD is a 3-week program focusing on motivational intervention through group-counseling sessions, presentations, discussions and volunteer experiences in either the hospital setting or in the community. The goal is to help participants evaluate their behavior and perception of risk in relation to alcohol, substance abuse, and driving so they will want to make behavioral changes on their own. Upon completion of the program, participants are monitored for at least 12 months to check their progress.

Members of the law enforcement, judges, juvenile hearing boards, probation officers, and magistrates can refer Rhode Island teens to RYDD if the youth has been charged with and/or convicted of a driving or traffic violation, and is between 16 and 20 years old.

Through the new round of NIH funding, a clinical trial has been developed to determine which