**OKAMA AND THE GOOD SAMARITAN ACT**

OKAMA is very proud of its work to pass legislation intended to help Good Samaritans. Thanks to this effort, helpful citizens, occasionally our own EMTs and Paramedics can get critical information that could prevent acquiring a blood borne disease.

Several years ago, one of our Board Members, Eddie Simms, Director EMSSTAT (Norman), told us a story about a doctor attending a ball game. During the game, another spectator experienced a seizure in the stands. Before help could arrive, this doctor, an OU fan that lives and practices in Texas, moved quickly to keep the seizure patient from hurting himself further and to protect his airway. The patient was moved by crews and transported to the hospital.

The physician went to wash as he found blood on himself, likely from the patient’s laceration. PPE wasn’t available to him when the patient presented to him in the stands at a ball game. Over the next couple of hours, he began to think he needed to check to see if he needed prophylaxis for blood borne disease. When he presented to the hospital where the patient was transported, he was told that the hospital wouldn’t be able to draw samples for testing since he was not protected as the Paramedics, firefighters, any law enforcement are had they had an exposure.

As OKAMA proceeded to research, the hospital was correct regarding Oklahoma Laws. Healthcare workers on-duty, Law Enforcement, Fire personnel, EMS personnel, and even mortuary workers are specifically entitled to information about the source patient if they have an exposure. Most of those are covered if they act in their roles, while on duty. Unfortunately, a good Samaritan, offering even lifesaving care as here, is not allowed to cause samples to be drawn and results given to them.

OKAMA learned that these were not common, every day events. But they have happened. Another example was an Air Force Airman, stopped to help a victim of a motorcycle accident. He had a significant amount of blood on him as the victim was combative. The EMS crews helped him as much as they could, but hospital staff would not release information citing HIPAA.

OKAMA went to work. Using the same statute that requires the hospital to draw samples and offer counsel to those protected, OKAMA requested amending the statute to include a “Good Samaritan, working without compensation”.

OKAMA continues to press the OSDH to get the Rules into place. Protecting a Good Samaritan, and our own colleagues who would give of themselves when acting while off duty is the right thing to do.