



EMS Information Bulletin - #17

DATE: May 6, 2004

SUBJECT: Statewide BLS Medical Treatment Protocols and Guidelines

TO: All Medical Command Facilities, and EMS Practitioners

FROM: Emergency Medical Services Office
PA Department of Health
(717) 787-8740

The Statewide BLS Medical Treatment Protocols have been placed on the Department's website in a PDF format at www.health.state.pa.us, then under "Quick Clicks," locate Emergency Medical Services (EMS) from the list on the right side of the page and click, then scroll down until you reach "EMS Training and Protocols."

Documents included in this project include Statewide BLS Protocols and Statewide Guidelines:

- Statewide BLS Protocols are standards that must be followed. The majority of these apply to all EMS personnel.
 - The two optional protocols (Pulsoximetry and MAST use) apply only to EMS personnel who are trained in the use of these devices and are serving with ambulance services that carry these optional devices.
 - There are also several protocols for EMTs that are assisting ALS personnel with ALS skills. These individuals must have training in these skills through an approved CE course for EMTs assisting ALS and must follow these protocols only in the direct presence of an ALS practitioner who is functioning with an ALS ambulance service and is responsible for the care provided when these protocols are used.
- Statewide Guidelines are documents that provide "best practice" information that will provide helpful information to EMS personnel, but this information is not considered the standard care that must be given in all situations. In some cases, ambulance services may use these guidelines or information from these guidelines when producing policies that are required for licensure, for example, infection control and lights and sirens policies.

Additionally, some regions may choose to pursue mandating the care within these guidelines by making them Department approved regional protocols.

These protocols will be effective September 1, 2004, but EMS personnel may immediately begin to provide care consistent with these protocols. After June 1, 2004, EMS care should begin to conform to these protocols, and these protocols will become the standard for complaint investigations and other treatment related issues after September 1, 2004.

These statewide protocols are applicable to all BLS care within each practitioner's scope of practice. These statewide protocols are applicable to ALS personnel when providing BLS treatment or for conditions that are applicable to both BLS and ALS personnel, for example, trauma patient destination, refusal of treatment, out-of-hospital DNR, etc.

These statewide protocols supercede any regional protocol that covers related topics. Regional medical, triage, treatment and transport protocols are still applicable when the regional protocol covers topics that are not included in these Statewide BLS Protocols, but none of these regional protocols may contradict the Statewide BLS Protocols. Additionally, these Statewide BLS Protocols do not replace care specific to the ALS scope of practice as defined in regional protocols and the PA Bulletin.

As permitted by the EMS Act and its regulations, EMS personnel may perform skills within the PA approved scope of practice for their level of training based upon Department approved protocols or the order of a medical command physician. These protocols should guide patient care, but the Department recognizes that situations will arise when the condition of a patient will not precisely meet the intent of a protocol. Contact with a medical command physician is the best way to resolve these situations, but when medical command contact is impossible, the EMS personnel should provide care within the individual's scope of practice using their best judgment.