



POLICY ON COMPONENTS OF AN EMERGENCY MEDICINE CONSULTATION

Contents

1	Purpose	2
2	Scope	2
3	Policy Details	2
3.1	Pre-arrival notification.....	2
3.2	Triage.....	2
3.3	Initiation of Care	2
3.4	Registration.....	2
3.5	Introduction to patient and caregivers	2
3.6	History Taking	3
3.7	Physical Examination	3
3.8	Consultation with supervisor	3
3.9	Diagnostic and Management Plan	3
3.10	Investigation Ordering.....	3
3.11	Communication with other Emergency Department Care Providers.....	3
3.12	Documentation of Initial Findings.....	3
3.13	Performance of Procedures	3
3.14	Review of Investigation Results	4
3.15	Review of Patient's Condition	4
3.16	Referral to Inpatient Unit	4
3.17	Completion of Medical Record	4
3.18	Explanation of the Patient's Condition.....	4
3.19	Reporting.....	4
3.20	Quality, Research and Education	5
3.21	For Patients Requiring Admission	5
3.22	For Patients Discharged from the Emergency Department	5
3.23	Certification Completion	5
4	References	6
5	Document Review	6
	• Responsibilities	6
	• Revision History	6

1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to document the components of an emergency medicine consultation. An emergency medicine consultation is a complex structured process of significantly variable length, depending on the complexity of the patient.

2 SCOPE

This policy is applicable to all Australasian Emergency Departments and providers of emergency care.

This policy does not apply to requests for telephone consultations (see *ACEM P44 – Provision of Emergency Department Telephone Medical Advice to General Public and P181 to Medical Practitioners*) [1, 2].

3 POLICY DETAILS

The purpose of the emergency medicine consultation is to maximise patient benefit, whilst minimising delay and inefficiency in the patient journey.

The components listed below will apply to every emergency medicine consultation.

For each episode of care provided by an Emergency Department, the following tasks should be completed

3.1 Pre-arrival notification

Relevant information from other care providers will be available to triage and senior medical staff within the ED upon arrival of the patient to the ED.

3.2 Triage

A treatment priority will be allocated to all patients who arrive for care based on the presenting complaint and/or vital signs recorded at presentation.

3.3 Initiation of Care

Immediate care will be provided to patients who present with severe physiological and/or psychological disturbance.

Effective first aid will be provided to patients waiting for treatment.

Early symptomatic treatment should be provided as soon as possible to all patients.

3.4 Registration

Appropriate information will be obtained to enable correct identification of the patient and facilitate subsequent communication with the patient, their relatives and relevant healthcare providers.

The patient's previous medical record will be retrieved for ED staff review, within an hour of the patient's presentation.

3.5 Introduction to patient and caregivers

Each patient will be correctly identified using the three unique identifiers as defined by the Australian Commission for Safety and Quality in Health Care's Standard Five [3].

Each staff member will introduce themselves to the patient and caregivers, outlining their role in the provision of the patient's care.

3.6 History Taking

A medical history will be obtained from the patient. The history may be focused on areas relevant to the provision of emergency care.

When required, additional historical information will be obtained from other relevant sources such as pre-hospital providers, caregivers, residential care facilities, bystanders and the patient's relatives or friends.

3.7 Physical Examination

The patient will have a physical examination performed that is relevant to their presenting problem(s).

When appropriate, patients should receive a primary nursing assessment, including relevant vital signs.

3.8 Consultation with supervisor

All resuscitation cases will be discussed with the most senior medical officer. This should be an emergency physician, or if not available, the most senior emergency doctor.

Doctors engaged in junior roles (junior medical officers and interns) will consult a senior doctor in the ED on the diagnostic and management plan for all patients.

Non-medical staff will practice in accordance with delegated authority from the responsible emergency physician, as per ACEM policy *P67 Policy on Extended role nursing and allied health practitioners working in emergency departments [4]*.

3.9 Diagnostic and Management Plan

A diagnostic and management plan will be generated in consultation with the patient, caregivers and the ED staff member (and supervisor in the case of junior doctors).

3.10 Investigation Ordering

Investigations relevant to the patient's problem will be performed. Results of common ED investigations requested, including pathology and medical imaging should be available within an hour of the investigation being performed.

3.11 Communication with other Emergency Department Care Providers

Communication of the patient's diagnostic and management plan will occur with other relevant ED care providers (e.g. allied health, social workers, drug and alcohol nurses).

Initial treatment orders will be available to other ED care providers.

3.12 Documentation of Initial Findings

Initial findings from history and examination and management plan will be recorded in the patient's medical record as soon as possible following the initial consultation.

3.13 Performance of Procedures

Relevant diagnostic and/or therapeutic procedures will be performed in compliance with relevant infection control standards.

Consent for procedures will be obtained according to standard policies.

3.14 Review of Investigation Results

Investigation results will be reviewed and recorded in the patient's medical record. An explanation for all abnormal results will also be recorded.

Alteration of the diagnostic and management plan will occur and be documented on the basis of unexpected results (see P54 – ACEM Policy on Follow-up of Results on Investigations Ordered from Emergency Departments).

3.15 Review of Patient's Condition

The patient's clinical condition will be reviewed at least hourly by ED staff.

Responsibility for ongoing care will be determined according to S18 – ACEM Statement on Responsibility for Care in Emergency Departments [6].

Patients with features of deterioration will be reviewed more frequently by the responsible clinician.

Patients who continue to deteriorate despite intervention will be reviewed by the most senior available clinician.

Patients whose vital signs fall outside predetermined parameters will trigger a clinical review. Should a decision be made to amend reportable vital signs, this will be documented by medical staff.

3.16 Referral to Inpatient Unit

Patients requiring consultation from another hospital service will be referred as soon as possible.

The reason for referral will be communicated to the external unit, including whether admission to hospital is requested, and notification of this referral will be documented in the medical record, including the time of referral and to whom the referral was made.

If consultation with another service is to occur in the ED, it will be completed no later than one hour from the time of initial referral.

3.17 Completion of Medical Record

The patient's medical record will be completed in a timely manner. It will include a provisional diagnosis, referrals made and details of the patient's disposition destination.

3.18 Explanation of the Patient's Condition

An explanation of the patient's assessment and management will be provided to the patient, and when relevant, to the patient's caregivers. This will occur in a way that is appropriate to the patient's cultural, language and educational background.

3.19 Reporting

All statutory reporting obligations will be performed.

All relevant medical reports will be provided.

Patient consent shall be obtained where appropriate.

Incidents that caused or could have caused patient or staff harm will be reported, according to the principles of open disclosure. Any incidents should also be reported in the relevant incident reporting system.

3.20 Quality, Research and Education

Patients may be asked to participate in quality and research projects, when appropriate.

Patients may be asked to participated in educational sessions, when appropriate.

3.21 For Patients Requiring Admission

The patient will leave the ED within one hour of the decision to admit.

The patient will leave the ED with all appropriate urgent investigation results obtained, and initial treatment orders, made in conjunction with the inpatient unit, to allow timely and safe transfer to the ward.

Transfer of the responsibility of care will occur between the ED and inpatient care providers.

3.22 For Patients Discharged from the Emergency Department

3.22.1 Pre-Discharge Screening

There will be a screening process to assess patients' suitability and safety for discharge.

A mandatory component of this screening process requires consultation and authorisation of this discharge by an emergency physician or a delegate.

A set of vital signs should be recorded within the last hour of the patient's stay in the ED, either prior to discharge from the ED or admission as an inpatient.

3.22.2 Discharge Medications

An explanation of the discharge medications provided and their possible adverse effects will be provided.

3.22.3 Discharge Instructions

Instructions will be provided to the patient (and/or caregiver) of measures to be taken to assist in the patient's treatment, including the timing and service involved in scheduled review of their condition. Instructions as to when to seek unscheduled review will be provided.

Where relevant, written discharge instructions should be given.

Documentation in the patient's medical record should reflect the content of discharge instructions.

3.22.4 Discharge Communication

Communication of the patient's diagnostic and management plan will occur with other relevant health care providers.

3.23 Certification Completion

Completion of all relevant certificates will occur prior to the patient's discharge from the ED.

4 REFERENCES

1. ACEM. 2013. *P44 Policy on the Provision of Emergency Department Telephone Medical Advice to the General Public*.
2. ACEM. 2013. *P181 Policy on the Provision of Emergency Medical Telephone Support to other Health Professionals*.
3. Australian Commission for Safety and Quality in Health Care. October 2012. *Improvement Guide Standard 5: Patient Identification and Procedure Matching*. Sydney, ASQHC.
4. ACEM. 2014. *P67 Policy on Extended role nursing and allied health practitioners working in emergency departments*.
5. ACEM. 2014. *P54 Policy on Follow-up of Results on Investigations Ordered from Emergency Departments*.
6. ACEM. 2012. *S18 Statement on Responsibility for Care in Emergency Departments*.

5 DOCUMENT REVIEW

Timeframe for review: every five (5) years, or earlier if required.

- **Responsibilities**

Document authorisation: Council of Advocacy, Practice and Partnerships

Document implementation: Council of Advocacy, Practice and Partnerships

Document maintenance: Policy and Research Department

- **Revision History**

Version	Date of Version	Pages revised / Brief Explanation of Revision
v1	Nov - 2008	Approved by Council
V2	Jul - 2014	Amendments to 3.2, 3.5, 3.8, 3.10, 3.15, 3.16, 3.18, 3.19, 3.21, 3.22.1

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