



POLICY ON THE PROVISION OF EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT TELEPHONE MEDICAL ADVICE TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This document is a policy of the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine (ACEM) and relates to the provision of emergency medical advice over the telephone to patients, carers and non-health professionals who phone a hospital Emergency Department (ED).

This policy is applicable to all EDs in general.

2. POLICY

ACEM recognises that patients, carers and non-health professionals may telephone the ED in an attempt to seek emergency and other medical advice. The core business of EDs is to deal with patients who attend in person and therefore, there should be systems in place to divert telephone advice calls to an appropriately staffed and resourced service. In the absence of such a service, the ED should give advice as per the policy below. ACEM believes that advice for emergency medical conditions should include first aid instructions as well as advising the caller to seek further assistance by calling an ambulance, or presenting to the nearest ED or other appropriate healthcare facility.

It is recognised that any telephone advice is usually limited and of a general nature because a full assessment cannot be made.

When specific advice is given, the caller must be advised that they are ultimately responsible for their health care, and for the implementation of any advice.

It is recognised that advice given by telephone does not constitute a full assessment and emergency staff should err on the side of caution. They should seek to ensure the patient receives appropriate full assessment wherever possible, before further advice is given.

3. PROCEDURE AND ACTIONS

Emergency Departments should ensure that all ED staff are aware of the policy on telephone advice. Where advice is given, the date, time and advice given should be documented.

Note: In the review of this document, P44 (July-06) 'Policy on the Provision of Emergency Department Telephone Medical Advice' was divided into two policies: (i) Revised P44 – Policy on the Provision of Emergency Department Telephone Medical Advice and (ii) P181 – Policy on the Provision of Emergency Medical Telephone Support to other Health Professionals.

4. DATES AND NOTES

Reviewed and approved: *July 2006*

Last reviewed and approved: *July 2013*

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