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Ask the CAMTS

## Medical Protocols

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Several years ago, the Commission on Accreditation of Medical Transport Systems (CAMTS) Board of Directors established a medical protocol committee composed of the physicians on the board representing the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Association of Critical Care Transport, the American College of Emergency Physicians, the Air Medical Physician Association, and the National Association of EMS Physicians to review select medical protocols (clinical guidelines) submitted by medical transport systems applying for accreditation. Over the past 20 years, the board of directors has reviewed about 4,000 applications for accreditation that includes a review of the medical protocols. The board's intent with every review is to help programs improve the quality of patient care and safety of their service. The medical protocol committee was formed because during these reviews there were weaknesses identified regarding medical protocols; there were no protocols for certain patient diagnoses that would be transported based on the program's scope of care, and some protocols were not congruent with current medical practice. The committee recognizes physician preferences but provides feedback specific to the protocols reviewed that may indicate deviation from current generally accepted clinical practice and evidence-based medicine (when available). See the study by Evans et al<sup>1</sup> for pediatric sepsis.<sup>1</sup>

The committee's findings are identified as areas for improvement in the official letter to the medical transport service following board meeting deliberations. This is an opportunity for the medical director to

review all the protocols, not just the 4 or 5 that were specifically reviewed by the committee. In some cases, the medical director may be asked to submit a revised protocol (s) in a written progress report.

Beginning with the July 2019 board meeting, all programs applying for accreditation must be in substantial compliance with the 11th Edition Accreditation Standards that were published in October 2019 and in compliance with the medical protocol standard as follows:

**03.02.05** The medical director(s) updates the medical guidelines at least annually to ensure current best practices. The medical guidelines are in a written format and include an updated attestation signed and dated by the medical director.

The medical protocol committee recommends the following elements be included when a medical protocol is created or revised:

1. When to use the protocol/guideline based on the expectation that care providers are expected to use their knowledge and experience to develop a working diagnosis
2. Assessment (patient history, physical examination, and diagnostic test results to support or refute the working diagnosis to select the appropriate protocol to follow)
3. Treatment (literature-based interventions in the protocol)
4. Response (reassessment of the patient; did treatment make the patient better or worse?)

5. Documentation (of clinical judgment, of improvement in history, physical, diagnostics, vital signs, and so on, including appropriate documentation for quality metrics)

CAMTS does not intend to dictate the medical practice of our accredited medical transport services. Most services apply for emergency critical care, and, therefore, these medical protocols should reflect current best practices in critical care. However, programs applying for other levels of care should submit protocols reflective of their applied level.

CAMTS does not have a list of standardized medical protocols at this time. The scope of care varies greatly among accredited services. Many accredited services perform only interfacility transports, international transports, or medical escort services. There are National Model EMS Clinical Guidelines (Version 2.2) that were published by the National Association of EMS Officials in January 2019.<sup>2</sup> These are pertinent to state and local emergency medical services system clinical guidelines and may be helpful to programs who respond to scenes.

If you have any questions or concerns about the medical protocol committee, please contact the CAMTS office at 864-287-4177.

## References

1. Evans IV, Phillips GS, Alpern ER, et al. Association between the New York sepsis care mandate and in-hospital mortality for pediatric sepsis. *JAMA*. 2018;320:358-367.
2. Available at: <https://www.nasemso.org/projects/model-ems-clinical-guidelines>. Accessed.

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