



SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES AGENCY, INC.

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MEMO

DATE: 5-7-07

TO: All SLO County ALS Providers

FROM: Thomas Ronay, M.D., FACEP
EMSA Medical Director
546-8728

SUBJECT: Advanced Airway Maneuver Evaluation Project

The San Luis Obispo County Emergency Medical Services Agency, Inc. (EMSA), through the Quality Assurance/Improvement Committee is asking for your help in the ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of our county's Airway Management Policy and training procedures.

Advanced airway management in the prehospital setting is challenging, and recent national studies support this with reported endotracheal intubation error rates between 22 to 30 percent.¹ Furthermore, airway management is often considered to be the most important procedure performed by prehospital personnel, and because of its importance, the National Association of EMS Physicians (NAEMSP) has issued a position paper recommending that all EMS systems further monitor prehospital airway management procedures.

In response to the NAEMSP recommendation, the EMSA has taken the first step in establishing a quality improvement monitoring process with the creation of the Advanced Airway Maneuver Form (attached). The purpose of the Form is to collect specific data about prehospital advanced airway maneuvers performed in our county. When a sufficient amount of data is collected, the EMSA, through the Quality Improvement Committee, will evaluate the effectiveness of our Airway Management Policy and training procedures and implement any necessary changes. The

¹ Wang HE, Lave JR, Sirio CA, Yealy DM. Paramedic Intubation Errors: Isolated Events or Symptoms of Larger Problems? Abstract. Health Affairs. 25 (2): 501-509, 2006.

¹ Guyette FX, Greenwood MJ, Neubecker D, Roth R, Wang HE. Alternate Airways in the Prehospital Setting. Prehospital Emergency Care. 11 (1): 55-61, January/March 2007.

data collected will be used to address aggregate systemwide issues and not the competence of individual field providers.

With an implementation date of **June 1, 2007**, we are depending upon your support and participation in this important project in the following ways:

- Please make available a supply of the Advanced Airway Maneuver Forms (as a two-sided page) to all your prehospital paramedics and flight nurses by June 1st.
- Please ensure that your designated EMS Coordinator receives the completed Forms from the field personnel on every intubation attempt. Instruct the field personnel to send their completed Forms, together with the related patient care reports, to the designated EMS Coordinator.
- Please have the EMS Coordinator review them for completeness and forward them to the EMSA at the end of each month.

Since the number of advanced airway maneuvers performed in this county is relatively low (generally under twenty a month), every case needs to be collected to obtain a sufficient amount of data. We will share our findings with all the EMS System participants at the conclusion of our data analysis.

Instructions for completing the form are on the back. However, for clarification, please note the following:

- Ensure that any paramedic or flight nurse who attempts an advanced airway maneuver completes the Form, regardless of who transports the patient. For example, if one paramedic attempts an airway and fails, then another paramedic attempts and succeeds, then each paramedic needs to complete a Form (one Form per each paramedic/flight nurse).
- Please assure field personnel that the Form will be used to collect aggregate data and will not be used to monitor any individual's airway performance.

The EMSA appreciates the support and participation of your organization in this vital project to monitor the effectiveness of our county's Airway Management Policy and training procedures. With your help, we anticipate this project will result in optimal proficiency in prehospital airway management and, ultimately, improved emergency medical care for the residents of our county.