



*** PARAMEDIC ALERT ***

No. 2010-02

Topic: AMA Documentation

Effective: 2/5/2010

Attention: All El Dorado County Prehospital Providers

The CQI Committee has reviewed several patient care reports recently that involved patients refusing treatment and/or transport with seriously inadequate documentation of the calls. This Paramedic Alert is to serve as a reminder of what is expected when a patient refuses treatment or transport. Keep in mind that AMA non-transport result in more litigation against EMS providers than any other type of call, and by not properly documenting these calls you are setting yourself up for litigation.

In order for a patient to refuse treatment and/or transport they must:

- Be at least 18 years of age (or be an emancipated minor).
- Be alert and oriented to person, place, time, and event.
- Not be under the influence of intoxicants (use your discretion when dealing with mildly intoxicated patients, contact law enforcement if needed).
- Be offered treatment and transport to the hospital by ambulance.
- Be advised of (and they understand) all the possible risks that their injury or illness may possess, up to and including death (Yes, that hangnail might get infected and they might die...).
- Be advised to seek further medical care for their condition either with their own doctor or at a hospital, clinic, etc.
- Be advised to call 911 again if they change their mind or if their condition worsens.

All of these items must be legibly documented on the PCR along with a detailed description of the history, exam findings, and a complete

set of vital signs. If possible a second set of vital signs will show that there weren't any changes in the patient's condition before they signed the AMA and you have done all you could to convince them to be treated/transported. Remember to have the patient sign the AMA section on the PCR and to obtain the appropriate witness signatures as well. The requirement to contact the base station and have the physician talk directly with the patient was removed in the July 09 policy revision, however you may still contact the base and speak with an MICN if you feel doing so will help change the patient's mind or would like advice or assistance from the base.

Keep in mind that patients in custody of law enforcement still have the right to medical treatment and transportation. Law enforcement officers cannot sign for the patient, however if it is too dangerous to have the patient sign (e.g., hand-cuffed patient) then the officer can sign as a witness to a verbal refusal. This of course must be followed by your full documentation of the circumstances on the PCR. This would be an ideal situation to contact the base station and speak with an MICN as a form of additional documentation.

Please review the Refusal of Care and/or Transportation Policy in the "Field Policies" section of the EMS Manual for additional information on the subject.