



VITALS

A Weekly Safety Newsletter For Medical Transport Professionals

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Make Your Patient Care Report A Safety Net- Part 1

What is more boring than documentation? The burdens of record keeping weigh on everybody. It's mundane and routine, until you need proof of what you think you remember you did or didn't do. We've all heard, "If you don't write it down it didn't happen!" That's right up there with "If a tree falls in a forest, there is no sound if there is no one to hear it." It still happened. You just can't prove it! As somebody who has been sued for both academic and medical malpractice, I know the value of documentation that accurately depicts what occurred.

Here are a few questions to ask yourself:

- Is what you do important?
- Do you do it well?
- Could you do it better?
- Do you make mistakes?
- Is part of your job preventing others from making mistakes?
- Do you work in an error-free system?



Hopefully, your answer to each of these questions is "yes", except for the last one. If you think you work in an error-free system, in my experience you are utopian, not doing anything, lying, or psychotic. Everybody makes mistakes every day. Our collective job is to put systems in place to minimize the negative impact of our mistakes.

Any form of medical transportation is a high error opportunity endeavor. We have lots of chances to make mistakes. Decisions are made with incomplete information, in urgent circumstances, with systems of care that may not work well together. There are lessons to be learned from experiences in hospitals.

In February of this year, the Kaiser Family Foundation published a report which showed that between 2003 and 2005 "patient safety lapses" in hospitals increased by 3%. There were 1.16 million lapses in 40.6 million hospitalizations or 2.85%. About a quarter of a million deaths could have been prevented if fewer mistakes were made. The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality looked at the most common root causes. Several were based on documentation issues which resulted in communication problems, inadequate information flow and the organizational transfer of knowledge.

This is a fancy way of saying, "What we have here is a failure to communicate." One definition of documentation is "the supplying of documents or supporting references or records." You are providing proof of why you went to where you went, what you saw when you got there, what you did in response to what you saw, how the patient responded to what you did, how and why you went to where you were going, where you went, how the patient was when you got to where you were going, to whom you gave the patient, what you told them and what you gave them.

The Articles Continues Next Week



Sign Up for The
EVOC - "T3" Train-the-Trainer Course
August 25-27 in Iowa, or September 22-24 in California

American Integrated Training Systems, Inc. (AITS) is conducting an EVOC Train the Trainer course in conjunction with the Delaware TWP Fire Department, August 25-27 in Des Moines, Iowa, and with San Diego Medical Service in San Diego, California on September 22-24. The course will qualify instructors to present the classroom portion of the training and provide an orientation to the practical driving exercises. Each participant will act as a student and coach for ambulance driving exercises. Cost is \$575 and registration closes August 20. For more information please contact Billy Rutherford at 703-440-0914 or brutherf@aitstraining.com.

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