

Information transfer from prehospital to ED health care providers.

Benner JP, Hilton J, Carr G, Robbins K, Hudson K, Brady W, et al
Department of Emergency Medicine, University of Virginia
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1. Why is this topic important?

Proper transfer of information from EMS providers to emergency department personnel is critical many times to appropriate patient care in the ED. By their very function as on scene providers, prehospital personnel are well-positioned to explain the specific details of mechanism of injury, environmental factors, and patient illnesses. As the study states, many times the paramedic's report is the often the "only source of information available to the physician."

2 What does this study attempt to show?

The study attempted to examine the effectiveness of information transfer from EMS provider to ED physician, and if the physicians were satisfied with the quality and process of the communication. Methods used were an internet survey to create a list of the seven most common ED patient presentations. From this information, the researchers created forms that listed pertinent fifteen data points that were the most important and relevant to each of the identified patient presentations. The end points were percent of EMS reports that correctly communicated the relevant and important patient information points to the physician, and percent of the treating physicians who were satisfied with the report and believed it assisted them with patient assessment and diagnosis

3 What are key findings?

EMS correctly communicated 44% of the pertinent data points during 296 patient transfers to the ED during the study period. The physicians were satisfied with only 51% of all the reports and dissatisfied with 11%; 25% had no opinion and 13% were unknown. There was no significant correlation between the quality of EMS crew communication and physician satisfaction. Differences were noted between the practice and experience level of EMS providers, as well as provider levels within the ED, ranging from residents to medical students to attending physicians. The researchers concluded that despite the limitations of the study, it found that improvements need to be made in all forms of information transfer between EMS and ED providers, including written documentation, hand-off reports, and pre-arrival radio reports (biophone).

4 How is patient care impacted?

Accurate and properly transferred patient information between EMS and ED providers is crucial to correct assessment, diagnosis and treatment of the patient. Resources and staff within the ED cannot be allocated appropriately for each patient without correct communication of patient information before and after patient arrival. This study has impact because it challenges EMS providers to perform better information transfer. Given, it has limitations concerning design and size, but is an important attempt to measure and quantify the effectiveness of EMS information transfer.