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Valley Hospital Emergency Department Introduces New Initiatives to Decrease Waiting Times for Paramedics, Patients

“EM Xpress” to Alleviate Paramedic Waiting Time While Parallel Provider Triage Continues to Benefit Walk-In Patients

Introducing Emergency Medicine (EM) Xpress

The Emergency Department has created a new program to reduce the amount of time it takes for the “transfer of care” between paramedics and the hospital.

On February 26, 2006, EMS personnel, which includes paramedics and EMT-Is, began working in the Emergency department from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. – traditionally the ER’s busiest times – to offload ambulance patients and begin the necessary workup. “Even if we’re waiting for an ER bed, our EM Xpress is available to care for the patients, allowing the paramedics to return to the streets more quickly,” explained Jim Holtz, Director of Emergency Services for Valley Hospital.

Because the EMS personnel are Valley Hospital employees, they will also be able to assist in the Emergency department with other tasks and projects.

EM Xpress was developed to comply with Senate Bill 458, which was passed during the 2005 Nevada state legislative session. Essentially, this bill initiated an official study regarding the length of time it takes for the transfer of care to pass between paramedics and the hospital staff. Each Las Vegas hospital is equipped with Transfer of Care software that captures the time EMTs arrive onsite until the patient’s transfer of care occurs. Because the software will track both first responders and hospitals, the study’s intent is to examine problems that are leading to the delayed transfers while also reducing the EMS offload/transfer time. The study begins March 1, 2006.

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Parallel Provider Triage Reduces Patients' Time To Be Seen by Physician

“The parallel provider triage has been very successful since we started it on October 31, 2005,” said Holtz. “Before, patients were triaged by a registered nurse and then they returned to the lobby to wait for an available bed. Now, the ER physician works with the RN who is completing the assessment and orders necessary testing at the time of triage.”

Background

Clark County hospitals use a color-coded “green-yellow-red-black system” to indicate the estimated waiting time to transfer patient care from the paramedics to the hospital team. A green status means no waiting for paramedics to offload their patients, while black status indicates a wait of 60 minutes or more.

Between February 1 and February 26, 2006, Valley Hospital was on green status 95.7 percent of the time. “Green status is a testament to a hospital-wide commitment to improving patient flow,” said Kevin Stockton, Chief Operating Officer. “The sooner we can turn over patient beds in the ER, the sooner we can accommodate all ambulance and walk-in traffic. The efforts of the Emergency and Admitting departments, inpatient units and house supervisors have made a significant difference in reducing ER waiting times at Valley Hospital.”