

January 18, 2019

Kris Gagliardi
National Patient Pathways Manager
St John New Zealand
PO Box 7084
Nelson 7042

By email: clinical.excellence@stjohn.org.nz

Dear Kris

Emergency inter-hospital transfers: discussion document

Thank you for seeking feedback on the above consultation. As you know, the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA), which includes the Faculty of Pain Medicine, is responsible for the training and examination of anaesthetists and pain medicine specialists and for the standards of clinical practice in New Zealand and Australia. ANZCA's mission is to serve the community by fostering safety and high-quality patient care in anaesthesia, perioperative medicine and pain medicine.

The New Zealand National Committee (NZNC) of ANZCA has reviewed the draft discussion document/guide on the use of Intensive Care Paramedics (ICPs) for time-critical inter-hospital transfers (IHTs) across New Zealand.

ANZCA considers that, overall, the document is logical and adheres to accepted principles. We note, however, that much of what is in the document could change because ICPs' scope of practice (as referred to in the document) may change as they move towards registration. This may alter their clinical capabilities.

In the meantime, the document and subsequent discussions could prove useful for driving the up-skilling of clinical staff (including ICPs) to deliver improved care. In particular, other health systems use up-skilled ICPs to meet the requirements for mixed time-critical and skill-critical transfers in a cost effective and sustainable manner, with good patient outcomes.

ANZCA provides the following comments, acknowledging that some of them may be self-evident to the working group.

It is important to recognise that there are exceptions to any generalisation. For example, a clinical condition that is predominantly time-critical may, on occasion, also be skill-critical. Further, some 'emergency' IHTs from EDs to another hospital, or from a rural/peripheral hospital to a larger facility, are neither skill-critical nor time-critical. We suggest that this is addressed in the document if it is considered relevant.

An option for clinical escort for transfers of patients with a time-critical condition is to have just a doctor, although this is not listed in the document. A transport nurse is referred to, but no definition is provided of what this means.

A 'retrieval team' is defined as a transport nurse and a doctor. It is unclear what it is about a transport nurse and a doctor that makes them a retrieval team. We suggest a retrieval team could also be an ICP and a doctor.

With regards to transfer modes, we note the following:

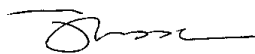
- A recent audit in Australia showed it is far better and quicker to transfer a patient by road unless the distance exceeds at least 150km (up to 200km) and/or up to 2 hours' drive with assessment for aeromedical transfer >1.5 hours' drive time.
- The compromise for driving is the time the vehicle asset is not available for other work related activities.
- Most road assets provide an easier and safer environment for managing most patients than aeromedical platforms.
- The document does not include issues such as increased bariatric requirements, which can make aeromedical transfers more challenging or even impossible.
- Using any asset makes that asset unavailable for other taskings.

ANZCA considers the last section of the document on patient management and clinical responsibility is important for reinforcing standards for communication regarding roles and responsibilities, and determining whether the situation is time-critical or skill-critical. It is impossible to pre-empt every situation, but we support the resolve to address issues in a collegial manner.

Anaesthesia is a pioneering speciality with regards to transferring patients and this continues locally and internationally. Being an ongoing stakeholder in both public and private inter-hospital transfers, we would be happy to continue working co-operatively with Ambulance (and other) services with these activities.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this submission, please contact Mary Harvey (Senior Policy Adviser) in the first instance on 04 585 9780 or at mharvey@anzca.org.nz.

Yours sincerely



Dr Jennifer Woods
Chair, New Zealand National Committee
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