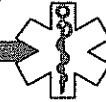




San Joaquin County

Emergency Medical Services Agency



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Policy Memorandum No. 2010-01

DATE: February 8, 2010

TO: ALS and MICN Personnel
ALS Providers
ALS Training Programs
Base Hospital Physicians
Receiving Hospital Physicians and Nurse Liaisons

FROM: Richard Buys, MD, Medical Director 

SUBJ.: Changes to the Paramedic Field Treatment Policies

Effective February 15, 2010, I am institute two significant changes to two long-standing ALS field treatment policies.

The first change is the removal of morphine sulfate as a standing order for the treatment of cardiac chest pain – EMS Policy No. 5719, ALS Acute Coronary Syndrome. This policy change may come as a shock to experienced and novice paramedics although this change has been debated in the medical literature for sometime. A definitive study from Duke University has shown that acute coronary syndrome patients receiving morphine have a higher death rate then those patients that receiving only nitroglycerine. The study concludes that nitroglycerin has a desired physiological effect that addresses the patient's cardiac ischemia. While the study found morphine to have no positive impact on cardiac ischemia even though pain was diminished. The author's of the study believe that morphine may worsen the underlying disease by masking patient pain. In addition, the well-established and potentially harmful side effects of morphine including respiratory depression, lowering of the blood pressure and slowing heart rate demonstrate that morphine is not a benign intervention.

My second significant change is the removal of furosemide (Lasix) for the treatment of congestive heart failure (CHF) – EMS Policy No 5772, ALS Acute Pulmonary Edema. Various studies have failed to demonstrate short-term or emergent benefits for the administration of furosemide for patients with congestive heart failure.

Lastly, I am amending the ALS treatment protocols to allow base hospital MICN personnel to relay orders from the Base Hospital Physician that is within policy or protocol. If the need arises for a base hospital physician to order a medication, dose, route or procedure outside or policy or protocol but with the paramedic scope of practice for San Joaquin County that order must be given over the radio/taped line directly by the Base Hospital Physician.

If you have, any questions please contact either: Kevin O'Loughlin, Sr., MICP, EMS Specialist at (209) 468-6818 or by email koloughlin@sigov.org; or Mary Amaral, RN, MICN, EMT-P at (209) 468-6322 or by email at mamaral@sjgh.org.