



South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS
Foundation Trust
Nexus House
Gatwick Road
Crawley
RH10 9BG

Date 3rd April 2018

Email:

Email:foi@secamb.nhs.uk

Dear,

I am writing in response to your enquiry under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) reference FOI/18/03/04.

You requested the following information, please also see our response below:

Q1:

In the event of a call where the patient is presenting with vomiting, drowsiness, confusion and it is stated that the patient suffers from Addison's Disease/adrenal insufficiency, and that the patient may be having an adrenal crisis, how is this call prioritised?

Please detail:

a) what level of priority this call would be given.

It is not possible to say precisely what priority your example would be given as each patient is triaged (prioritised) by the symptoms they are experiencing at the time of the call. Individual patients may present with similar symptoms, however require signposting to different care providers within different timeframes. If the caller declares that the patient has a known medical condition (e.g. Addison's disease) with specific instructions to follow in that situation (e.g. a suspected adrenal crisis) the Emergency Medical Advisor (EMA) will advise an emergency ambulance attends the patient. Some further questions will be asked by the EMA to ensure appropriate clinical advice and support is given, however a full triage of symptoms will not be undertaken as it is deemed not required, given that the patient knows their condition well.

b) if the call would be forwarded to a Clinical Advice Team or on call paramedic and if so how long this is targeted to take

If the patient has multiple symptoms or a declared complex medical history, which is outside the scope for an EMA to assess, they may ask for a Clinical Supervisor (nurse or paramedic) to call the patient back and assess their condition. The target for a Clinical Supervisor to call a patient back in this situation is within 20 minutes.

c) if your computer system prompts call handlers to ask if the patient has Addison's Disease if the above symptoms are mentioned but the disease is not mentioned by the caller.

SECamb (along with half 999 and all NHS 111 providers) use a triage support tool called NHS Pathways. During triage, questions regarding specific medical conditions (such as Addison's Disease) will be asked only if relevant to the symptoms the patient is experiencing. For some symptoms, the Emergency Medical Advisor may ask if the patient is taking steroids or any

medication that suppresses their immune system. If the patient is unconscious (without concerns regarding their airway or breathing) the EMA will ask if the patient suffers from adrenal insufficiency. If the caller answers yes to this question, the EMA will give instructions to administer a hydrocortisone injection kit, if one is available and to hand.

d) if your call handlers are able to immediately send an ambulance based on the mention of one or more of the following phrases: 'Addison's Disease', 'Adrenal Insufficiency', 'Adrenal Crisis', 'steroid dependent', regardless of the presenting symptoms.

If a patient has a known medical condition and has been a specific action plan by their health care professional to dial 999 for an ambulance, some further questions will be asked after an emergency ambulance is recommended by the EMA. An appropriate emergency response (e.g. ambulance or single response vehicle) will be sent to the patient when available and within a clinically appropriate timeframe. If the specific action plan given by the health care professional is for the patient to go to hospital immediately, the EMA will ask the patient whether there is someone available who can safely transport them to the nearest Emergency Department. If the patient has Addison's Disease, but does not have a specific action plan to dial 999 or attend hospital, the EMA will undertake a full triage of symptoms to assist in signposting the patient to appropriate care.

e) how you monitor that such calls are being dealt with correctly by call handlers.

All Emergency Medical Advisors and Clinical Supervisors have a selection of their 999 calls audited to ensure compliance and patient safety.

Q2:

Does your Ambulance Trust have a system of red flagging patients with Addison's Disease?

No. As explained above, the 'flagging' of patients with known medical conditions (such as Addison's Disease) is not required as this is managed within NHS Pathways telephone triage.

If so,

a) Do you provide any form of confirmation of this process having been completed, written or otherwise?

N/A

b) Do you contact red flagged patients regularly to ensure that their details are up to date?

N/A

c) What are your procedures in the event of an IT failure making the red flag list unavailable for call handlers?

If we have an IT failure in one of our two Emergency Operations Centres (EOCs) then the other EOC will take over. If we had a total IT failure in both EOC's then we would be on emergency procedures for all 999 calls. Basic information would be taken over the phone and documented on paper for ambulance dispatch. If specific medical conditions are declared, the EMA would note these and again clinical support can be gained from a Clinical Advisor in the EOC.

Q3:

Please detail any training given to new and current call handlers in order to recognise symptoms and severity of Addison's Disease/adrenal crisis.

Emergency Medical Advisors receive training regarding Addison's Disease and Adrenal Crisis within a pre-course distance learning pack. They are further trained face-to-face during their call handling course.

Q4:

How many complaints has your Trust had about delays or inappropriate response from call handlers in cases concerning an adrenal patient, over the past 5 years?

From the free text search we found 8 incidents in the last 5 years of complaints concerning adrenal patients. *Please note we are only able to extract this information using the free text search which may not be an accurate representation.*

I hope you find this information of some assistance.

If for any reason you are dissatisfied with our response, kindly in the first instance contact Caroline Smart, Information Governance Manager via the following email address:

FOI@secamb.nhs.uk

Yours sincerely

Freedom of Information Coordinator
South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust