An abridged “preview” from the Second Edition of the Principles of EMD textbook...

Quality Management: The Feedback Loop

- Clawson • Dernocoeur

Medical dispatch case review must begin at the same time the EMDs begin using priority dispatch. EMD performance feedback, as well as cases reviewed from the first day of protocol use, boosts protocol compliance. The presence of an EMD instructor or EMD-Q on the communication floor, in those centers that start using priority dispatch at a scheduled date and time, can increase confidence as well as identify gross EMD performance problems. Calls can be reviewed as soon as they are completed, providing immediate feedback on the first day.

A properly implemented case review process can shift the quality management paradigm from a punitive process toward a more positive, productive one.

The theme of quality management should include “Let’s catch them doing it right!” As part of the case review process, the system should have a procedure for acknowledging exemplary EMD performance. Positive reinforcement in the initial implementation of priority dispatch can play a significant role in increasing the confidence of the EMD in following the protocol. Improving compliance to the protocol leads, remotely, to improved patient care.

The end result of case review in systems with high compliance to protocol is the identification of what are called the “elements of success.” These elements constitute identifiable features of performance and protocol that occur on cases with successful outcomes, control of difficult situations, and increased customer satisfaction. Superior compliance to the protocol is similar to playing a record at the right speed with a clean needle. The music that the recording musicians intended you to hear is clear and beautiful. It is the same with compliance to protocol; which, done right, results in outcomes that were intended by the protocol designers.

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Navigator ’98! September 1-5 Snowbird, UT

STATE EMS AWARDS...
Congratulations!

Two Academy EMD Instructors recently received special recognition from their respective State EMS organizations. Mike Hartley, an EMD instructor at the University of Iowa’s EMS Learning Resource Center, was named Iowa State “Full-Time EMS Instructor of the Year,” largely as a result of his instrumental work in expanding and professionalizing EMD training in Iowa. The award was presented at the Iowa State EMS Convention and Trade Show by Jerry Johnston, President of the Iowa EMS Association. The Learning Resource Center is an Academy-

Licensed Training Site, offering EMD certification as an integral component of their already excellent EMS educational program. More information about the center and the various kinds of courses offered can be obtained by calling (319) 356-2597, or from their website: <www.uihc.uiowa.edu/pubinfo/EMSLRC>.

Our own Academy Vice President, Steve Carlo, was honored with the State of New York’s inaugural “EMS Communications Specialist of the Year” award. It was the first time the State has offered an award specifically for Communications Specialists and Dispatchers. This is a trend we hope will spread to other State and government agencies! Chairperson Thomas Rahilly, PhD, presented the award on behalf of the New York

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Our Need for Visionary Leaders in EMS

Alexander Kuehl, MD, MPH, FACS

One of the highlights of the Navigator meeting each year is the Leader’s Summit, where EMS executives from across the country and around the world compare notes, and more imperative these days, compare visions of the future. The Summit this past time around was keynoted by Dr. Henry Heimlich, one of the most innovative medical thinkers of our time, along with insights from other EMS experts. Approximately 60 industry leaders spent the better part of the day defining the issues, predicting the future, and making suggestions for mid-course corrections.

To briefly summarize the predictions from our sometimes heated debate:

1. Leadership today is more important than ever.
2. A defining quality of a leader is to have a vision for the future.
3. Financial measures in all organizations will lead to more downsizing and consolidating of EMS services.
4. The role of first responders will become even more clinically important as they become increasingly integrated into the system.
5. Fire Departments will rarely be downsized; therefore, they must expand to play a larger and larger role as a provider of EMS.
6. Private providers are going to be increasingly squeezed by the EMS reimbursement system.
7. Electronic medical information systems are rapidly developing and access to this information at dispatch will become vital. Those systems that can be “owned” by the patient and information released by the patient to the provider of their choice may be the most successful.

8. Managed care organizations, especially the larger, totally merged systems, have been stalled; but, economics are going to continue to drive the system towards managed care solutions.

9. Dispatch will have to deal with all levels of providers in order to deliver seamless emergency medical care. In fact, in many areas, emergency medical dispatch and managed care dispatch will merge.

10. The principles outlined at Navigator ’96 in the Academy Position Statement concerning dispatch and managed care were reiterated. EMS call reception, information provision, and priority dispatch should be more closely linked to the front door of managed care call reception. The principles of good EMD must apply to the initial handling of calls at ALL medical information and access centers.

In summary, organizations will need visionary leaders to survive the confrontations of the next few years. While leaders and organizations must be flexible. The main task will be to decide what business they are really in. For many health care organizations the real business is NOT caring for the sick and injured, but caring for the bottom line and survival.

Dr. Kuehl can be reached through the Academy, or directly at: 518-562-7371, or via skuehl@cvph.org.

The Navigator ’98 Leader Summit is being revised and expanded to accommodate a series of individual presenters and still allow sufficient time for group commentary on each topic presented. If you have ideas or suggestions for topics, presenters, or how to make this forum even more effective, please contact the Academy.

Is a new employer in your future?

Huron Valley Ambulance in Ann Arbor, MI, is accepting applications for full time Communications Specialists. Paramedic (State of MI), minimum licensed EMT, EMD preferred. Excellent wages & benefit package. Educational opportunities.

Interested candidates should submit a resume to: Michael Long, Communications Supervisor / 2215 Hogback / Ann Arbor, MI 48111 or call (734) 971-4211 ext.142.
The Definitive EMD Gathering of the Year!

Those who attended Navigator '97 in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, witnessed firsthand the EMD Event of the Year. If one of the strengths of the Academy is in bringing leaders together within the EMD industry, then by any measure this conference had to be called a success. World-renowned EMS experts such as Jim Page, Jack Stout, Norm Dinerman, Jay Fitch, Steve Forry, Dr. Henry Heimlich and our own Drs. Kuehl and Clawson were on hand for powerful presentations about “doing it right” on the EMD and industry issues that concern you most. Topics covered the gamut for properly implementing cost-effective EMD, integrating with managed care organizations, mitigating and proactively avoiding common dispatch liability traps, managing and monitoring EMS resource allocations, and ensuring quality in emergency communications systems.

It is one of the primary missions of the Academy to provide an international forum for discussing standards and issues relating to the future of EMD, for the important dual purposes of “improving patient care and maximizing the efficiency of EMS systems.” Navigator plays a big part in accomplishing these objectives.

With 24,000 currently certified members in 16 countries, the Academy is now established as a powerful information and standard-setting membership organization. Meetings of the various Academy Boards and of the College of Fellows are held each year, some in connection with Navigator. This event is always an excellent opportunity for you as Academy members to network and share ideas, to become more involved in the global EMD movement, and to learn how to make a substantial difference in the early provision of patient care in your communities.

Thank you to everyone who participated in Navigator '97. We’re reviewing your evaluations carefully to make subsequent conferences even more effective. Please let us know if you have speaker or topic suggestions. We are revising and expanding the curriculum format for EMD-Q, the Leader Summit, and Manager Seminar. It is our goal to continue to provide the kind of EMD information you are looking for year after year.


Audio tapes of presentations from Navigator ’96 or ’97 may be ordered by calling AVEN (Audio Visual Education Network) at (800) 810-TAPE, (206) 440-7969, or see them online at <www.aven.com>.

A SAMPLE OF NAVIGATOR '97 EVALUATIONS—

“If I could only attend one conference a year I would make it Navigator!”

“I would recommend any service taking on priority dispatch should attend an EMD-Q course as well. Superb beginning to an important subject, keep up the momentum.”

“I genuinely feel that you have the correct formula for a successful TQM program that importantly will filter the essential TQM strategy into the field of EMD. The content of the course and base knowledge of the instructors pulled the ambitious program through.”

“The conference was extremely informative. My agency has been using the cards, however, we do not have a formal QA/QI process for dispatchers. Hopefully we will be implementing this quality management plan to increase our awareness and provide our community with better patient care. Thank you for all your assistance.”
All Navigator '98 sessions will be held at the Snowbird Resort Cliff Lodge, located high in the Utah Rocky Mountains near Salt Lake City.

A limited block of rooms has been reserved at the special Navigator Conference rate of only $89/night (single or double occupancy). Some condominium units are also available. Reservations are on a first-come, first-served basis and we cannot guarantee space. Please reserve your spot early by calling:

Snowbird Central Reservations: (800) 453-3000.
Cliff Lodge Front Desk: (801) 742-2222.

Registration questions can be answered directly by calling the Academy at (800) 960-6236.

SNOWBIRD RESORT—

Tucked between majestic peaks, Snowbird is an enclave of restaurants, shops, lodges and activities—all within walking distance of one another and only a few miles from the urban hub of Salt Lake City, home of the 2002 Winter Olympics. The 57,000 sq. ft. Cliff Lodge Conference Center provides a tranquil mountain environment where you can fully enjoy the experience without the distractions of urban meeting sites. In your spare time, take a leisurely nature hike, enjoy a tram ride, try some vigorous mountain biking, or spend time relaxing at the pool or world-class spa.

Dress code at the conference is strictly casual and you’ll have plenty of opportunities to network or just relax for a moment and enjoy the breathtaking view.

GRAND OKTOBERFEST—

Immediately after the conference, you may wish to stay over the Labor Day weekend for the Grand Oktoberfest at the Snowbird Event Center. This annual celebration is one of Snowbird’s largest and most popular traditions, brimming with German food, drink, dancing, music, and crafts. Free admission.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW—

All sessions earn hour-for-hour Continuing Dispatch Education (CDE). Attend Navigator and recertify!

- 24-Hour EMD Course, Mon. 8/31–Wed. 9/2
  The premier EMD Certification Course, taught by a senior instructor, meets all DOT & ASTM standards.

- 12-Hour EMD-Q Course, Wed. 9/2–Thur. 9/3
  Revised and improved specifically for Navigator 98. Designed specifically around MPDS quality control and improvement and creating an effective QIU.

- 8-Hour Executive Course, Tues. 9/1
  An MPDS overview, presented by Dr. Clawson on what EMD is, how it works, and how it works best.

- Leader Summit (expanded), Wed. 9/2–Thur. 9/3
  A newly expanded and revised professional forum for reviewing and discussing issues related to the future of telephone-delivered, non-traditional, out-of-hospital medicine. Various presenters, plus open discussion time.

- Manager Seminar, Wed. 9/2–Thur. 9/3
  A day & a half focused squarely on communication center operations and hands-on management, with presentations about conflict and stress, quality and TQM, and staffing. Various presenters, plus Q&A.

- EMD Conference, Thur. 9/3–Sat. 9/5
  The Leader, Manager, and EMD focus tracks provide an array of perspectives from various public safety communication leaders.

CANYON SHUTTLE SERVICE—

For a fee Snowbird offers airport shuttle transfers through Canyon Transportation. Please check with Central Reservations if you would like this service.

Also, in response to some concerns we’ve heard that the canyon atmosphere is too isolated and doesn’t provide enough restaurant options, we will also be providing complimentary shuttle service to and from downtown Salt Lake City each evening Wednesday through Saturday. The newly Accredited Salt Lake City Fire Dept. will also be opening its doors to tours of their dispatch center. It’s only a 20 minute ride down the canyon and for maximum flexibility we would still recommend renting your own car; however, by adding this downtown shuttle service, attendees will all be able to experience the best of both worlds. Snowbird is rated as one of the best customer service hotels in the industry. The food is world-class and the meeting rooms are nicely equipped, soundproofed, and climate controlled. We’ll see you there!
Quality Management...
(continued from page 1)

The data gleaned from the case-review process is analyzed in the Quality Improvement Unit (QIU), which results in the creation of several compliance reports. Each component (i.e., case entry, chief complaint selection, key questions, post-dispatch instructions, pre-arrival instructions, and final coding) of the protocol for each Chief Complaint must be regularly analyzed to identify performance problems.

In addition to the data gleaned from the EMDs' use of the protocol, other reporting components to the quality management process should include field feedback reports, incident reports and procedures for requesting clarification regarding the protocol. Field feedback reports, from prehospital and hospital personnel, assist the medical director in the further refinement of the EMS resource response. The results of this analysis are reviewed as part of an ongoing quality improvement process which improves performance through education and process change.

There are some faults so nearly allied to excellence that we can scarcely weed out the faults without eradicating the virtue.
— Oliver Goldsmith

The development of continuing education programs are in response to the educational needs identified through compliance to protocol data analysis and as a function of meeting routine educational needs. Automated reporting systems simplify compliance reporting.

With the provision of continuing education and performance feedback to the EMDs, the quality management cycle is complete. The remaining activities that are related to making changes to the protocols occur in conjunction with the Academy.

One of the most powerful features of priority dispatch is its use of a "uniform protocol." The inability of users to "customize" the protocol does not mean that the protocol is stagnate in its evolution. Since its inception the protocol has had more than one thousand changes to its design, content, and syntax. Changes to the protocol result from the submission of "Proposal for Change" forms that users send to the Academy. The Council of Standards carefully reviews each request and evaluates supporting data. With literally thousands of priority dispatch users, the potential to identify and recommend changes that may significantly enhance the protocol occur on a continual basis. This far outweighs any benefit that might be achieved by permitting uncontrolled local modification of the protocol and, therefore, the loss of this unique unified feature of priority dispatch.

Read more about quality management and other important EMD-related issues in the upcoming 2nd Edition textbook.

THREE NEW ACCREDITATIONS

Three more centers were recently Accredited by the Academy as a Center of Excellence. This is the highest honor the Academy can bestow and represents a lot of hard work and consistently high compliance to protocol.

The Academy congratulates the City of Miami Fire-Rescue Dept., the Salt Lake City Fire Dept., and Kent Ambulance Service NHS Trust. Dr. Jeff Clawson presented Chief C.A. Gimenez with Miami's award on October 22, 1997. Their QIU is staffed by José Estevanell and Pam Farber. Salt Lake City's award was presented during Navigator '97. Brian Dale

and Scott Frietag oversee their QIU. Kent Ambulance Service will receive their plaque at a special conference in the Midlands, U.K., this January.

All three of these agencies are to be commended. Accreditation focuses on compliance with "20 Points" and all applications are independently evaluated through the Academy's Board of Accreditation to verify implementation of an effective and comprehensive EMD program. There is a $1,500 application, processing, and review fee and updated forms are available.

At the general session of Navigator '97, Marc Gay, Academy Board of Accreditation Chair, presents Chief Tom Tallon with the award plaque honoring Salt Lake City Fire Department as the 15th Center of Excellence in the world. L to R: Dr. Jeff Clawson, Battalion Chief Reinhard Kauffmann, Captain Brian Dale, Scott Frietag, Chief Tallon and Marc Gay.

Congratulations!...
(continued from page 1)

State EMS Council and the Department of Health’s EMS Program in November at the New York State EMS Conference. Steve has worked in EMS since 1974, when he joined the Akron Fire Company as a volunteer, working as a Firefighter, EMT, Chaplain, Training and Communications Officer and later, Assistant Chief. He was one of the first EMD Instructors certified by the Academy at its inception in 1988. For the past several years he’s been employed as an EMD with Erie County Emergency Services, outside Buffalo, and as a field provider, instructor, and dispatcher with the Lancaster Volunteer Ambulance Corps, where he is still active. He recently accepted a full-time EMS teaching position at Erie Community College’s Emergency Technology Department.

The Academy congratulates Steve and Mike for their accomplishments in EMD and EMS education. Let us know if any Academy members in your state or area have received EMD-related awards or special recognition. It is always a pleasure to report on the successes of our members.

EMD Special Delivery in Springfield, Missouri.

On the morning of July 19, Diana Karr was on duty in the dispatch office of Springfield EMS. At 3:36 a.m. the 9-1-1 line rang. The caller was a soon-to-be grandmother, Bonnie Adams, whose 17-year-old daughter was in active labor on the living room floor. Diana quickly gathered the needed information and asked for a rural rescue unit to be dispatched. She was then informed by Mrs. Adams that the baby was crowning. Diana reassured her and continued to provide prearrival instructions.

At 3:56 a.m. Mrs. Adams told Diana that the baby’s head was out and facing down. She was concerned that the baby was moving and did not appear to be breathing. Diana remained calm, reassuring her, preparing her for the imminent delivery. A healthy baby girl, Khigla Parks, was born at 3:57 a.m.

Brad Mackey, EMS Manager, arrived at work that morning and listened to the call. He then spoke with Mrs. Adams, who was very thankful, stating that Diana made her feel comfortable and she felt as if she had known her all her life. Diana said that this was her most memorable call since coming to St. John’s Regional Health Center. She said the best part was when grandma put the phone close to the baby and she could hear her cry.

The Academy congratulates Diana and all the staff at St. John’s for their commitment to delivering quality EMD care to the public they serve.

Upcoming Courses

For more info. on these and other EMD Certification Courses call Medical Priority: (801) 363-9127:

Jan. 31 - Feb. 1 St Louis, MO
IH M Health Studies Center
Feb. 2-4 Grande Prairie, AB CANADA
Grande Prairie Fire Dept.
Feb. 2-4 Selden, NY
Selden Fire House
Feb. 3-5 Lethbridge, AB CANADA
Lethbridge Fire Dept.
Feb. 5-7 Mayetta, KS
Pottawatamie Tribal Fire Dept.
Feb. 9-11 Albany, OR
Linn County Sheriff’s Office
Feb. 11-13 Stamford, CT
EMS Inst. of Stamford Hospital
Feb. 13-15 Macon, GA
Med Ctr of Central Georgia EMS
Feb. 18-20 Gulfport, MS
American Medical Response
Feb. 18-20 Austin, TX
CAPCO
Feb. 19-21 St. Joseph, MO
Heartland Health System
Feb. 19-21 Geneva, IL
Kane County Sheriff’s Office
Feb. 19-21 Buffalo, NY
Rural/Metro Med. Svc. W. NY
Feb. 20-21 St Alberr, AB CANADA
Professional Medical Associates
Feb. 23-25 Ft Paynoe, AL
Univ. of AL School of Medicine
Mar. 2-4 East Tawas, MI
Iosco County 911
Mar. 4-6 Grayslake, IL
Criminal Justice Institute
Mar. 4-6 St Louis, MO
IH M Health Studies Center
Mar. 6-8 Chattanooga, TN
Memorial Hospital EMS
Mar. 9-11 Bangor, ME
Bangor PD
Mar. 12-14 Salt Lake City, UT
Medical Priority Consultants
Mar. 16-18 Austin, TX
CAPCO
Mar. 17-19 Spokane, WA
East Region EMS/Washington State Criminal Justice
Mar. 19-21 Geneva, IL
Kane County Sheriff Office

Footnotes:

The following organizations offer training & services of interest to Academy EMDs.

University of Iowa—EMS Learning Resource Center
Mike Hartley (319) 356-2597.
www.uelc.uiowa.edu/pubinfo/EMDLOG

U. of Alabama-Huntsville
Sheila George or Rick Beck
(205) 551-4413.

U. of South Alabama
Phyllis Vinson (334) 639-1070

Columbus State Comm.
College (Ohio & region)
Art Gholian (614) 228-1745.

Palm Beach Community
College (Florida & region)
Barry Duff (407) 439-8213.

Nash Community College
(Rocky Mt., NC)
Jay Darnell (919) 443-4011 x 312.

Phoenix College (Arizona)
Dr. R.M. Lewis (602) 285-7207.

N.H. Bureau of Emer. Com.
Bruce Cheney (603) 271-6911.

Memorial Hospital EMS
(Chattanooga, TN) — Bud Hathaway (423) 495-4678.

Mtn. EMS (Susanville, CA)
Jeff Diehl or Aaron Hinman
(916) 257-0249.

San Jose Fire Dept. (CA)
Gary Galasso (408) 277-4105.

Acadian Amb. (Lafayette, LA)
Todd Luparte or Terry Romero
(318) 267-3333.

Abbott Amb. (St. Louis, MO)
John Hoffman (314) 768-1000.

Team Dispatch – Florida
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1004 Green Pine Blvd., H-1,
West Palm Beach, FL 33409
Michael Richman (407) 687-9113.

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