



MEMORANDUM

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To: EMS Provider Agencies

From: Joseph Barger, MD
EMS Medical Director

Subj: Deletion of Needle Cricothyrotomy

Needle cricothyrotomy is being deleted as a skill performed in Contra Costa County effective today. We will be updating our Prehospital Care Manual and required equipment lists in mid-year to reflect these changes, but the equipment should be removed from responder vehicles and stocks in an expeditious manner. For the purposes of skills update, needle cricothyrotomy is therefore no longer a required element.

The main reason for deletion of this skill is lack of effectiveness of the procedure. Performance of needle cricothyrotomy has occurred at a rate of less than one time per year in our county over the past decade and has never been successful in contributing to a good outcome in any case during that time. As well, there are no meaningful EMS-based research studies that demonstrate efficacy of this procedure. The potential hazards of the procedure, costs of equipment, costs of ongoing training, and challenges of adequate skill retention are also issues that factored into the decision to eliminate the skill from our system.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have further questions.

