

April 20, 2007

March 19, 2007 Aeromedical Summit Summary

The 2007 California Aeromedical Summit was a success; with 77 attendees and productive break out sessions we now have a starting point for insuring statewide progress in air medical services.

The meeting began with a welcome from Dr. Cesar Aristeiguieta, Director, Emergency Medical Services Authority (EMSA). Next Daniel Smiley, Chief Deputy Director EMSA, discussed questions and concerns that have surfaced recently, he reviewed the status of air EMS services in California and current statutes and regulations. He also briefly discussed three topics of interest and their relevant statute and regulations: Integration of Aeromedical Services into the Local EMS Patient Transport System, Professional Roles, and Access and Patient Disposition.

Angelo Salvucci, M.D., Medical Director of Santa Barbara County EMS Agency presented Medical Quality & Medical Authority Control. He reviewed the goals: 1) High quality care for all patients; pre hospital and inter-facility transfer. 2) Construction of a system of care that best serves the public. He discussed staffing, time to treatment, and the need for outcome data. Challenges were revealed followed by suggested solutions which included statewide guidelines, approval of standardized procedures, minor adjustments to organizational procedures and incorporation of air medical services into LEMSA QI program.

Nancy Lapolla (Administrator for Santa Barbara County EMS Agency) and Bruce Lee (Administrator for Santa Clara County EMS Agency) presented on Access, Destination, Disposition, Dispatch and Data. This was an exceptional session; they reviewed access; the issues included air rescue vs air ambulance, multiple responses, provider processes in responding, use of contacts, rotation of providers and regional limitations. The portion presented on dispatch reviewed some of the challenges as being cross-jurisdiction responses, LEMSA destination policies, crew discretion, and flight decisions vs closest destination. Some of the ideas for opportunities are centralized dispatch, coordinated MCI responses, and use of integrated internet based tracking systems. It was summarized that most issues having to do with considerations for clinical care and operational appropriateness can best be managed by orientating to “best practices”, a systemized manner of using evidence to determine policies and protocols.

After lunch presentations were given by Calstar representatives on Air Safety, Cost & Reimbursement. Joe Cook, CEO of Calstar and Louie Bell, Chief Safety Officer begin the discussion stating that the air medical transportation industry has grown quickly, inherently so have the operational challenges. In a February 2007 report from the Government Accounting Office (GAO) it was noted that “safety of the industry has been difficult to determine primarily due to the lack of actual flight, flight-hour data”. Despite the lack of aggregate data there were matters that were of concern such as uninformed helicopter shopping and lack of weather reporting stations. Suggested solutions to assuring the highest level of safety possible include night vision goggles, in-service training, flight simulators, pilot training and cooperation with the Commission of Accreditation of Medical Transport Systems (CAMITS).

The presentation on reimbursements & cost given by Fili Gonzales and Joe Bunner reviewed the complicated financial burden of an air medical transport operation. Not only are the air craft, fuel and crew exceptionally high cost but these functioning in the costly health care industry make for extremely high expenses. Revenue is not always determined by volume of transports but more often by payer mix.

Captain Goetz from LA County Fire presented on Safety in Fire & Rescue. He reviewed issues encountered by the LA fire air unit such as rescue and medical services provided in LA County and their safety protocols.

Finally, participants broke out into three groups: I. Medical Control & Medical Quality, facilitated by Angelo Salvucci. II. Access, Dispatch, Selection, Disposition, facilitated by Nancy Lapolla and Bruce Lee. III. Professional Roles, facilitated by Bonnie Sinz (Chief, EMS Systems Division/EMS Authority). All groups produced several pages of ideas, needs, action items and questions. The recorded lists from these sessions are attached.

Evaluations received after the summit indicated that the meeting was beneficial, caveats were made as to whether a better air transport system would result e.g. "if follow through occurs". Other comments made on the evaluations are summarized as follows:

1. Issues most critical to air transport services
 - a. Financial
 - b. Control/standards for within LEMSA, inter-county, and RN oversight.
 - c. Skills & training of air crews and ground personnel.
 - d. Safety
 - e. Communication
2. Primary problem areas in your air service
 - a. Lack of standardization in dispatch between jurisdictions, and quality measurements.
 - b. Communication
 - c. When and how air is brought in; lack of oversight
 - d. Triage practices, oversight and quality improvement lacking.
 - e. Training and skill levels
 - f. Costs/reimbursement
 - g. Air ambulance vs. air rescue
 - h. Medical Control for RN's

Next

Based on the enthusiastic participation in the Summit and comments from the evaluation we will proceed with a plan to create statewide standards and/or guidelines. EMSA will commit to support this process; in addition it will require a significant commitment from EMS and aeromedical professionals. A task force will be formed that can begin the process by creating goals and outlining deliverables. Upon determining some goals and objectives subcommittees may be formed. There is no state funding for committee work however some staff time and teleconference accessibility can be provided by EMSA. Due to the complexity imposed by having a very large state and scarce funding, members willing to contribute must commit to represent the industry and not individual organizations.

Please consider volunteering to participate with this task force by submitting the below information to Luanne Heuer by May 18th. Reply to this e-mail, send a separate e-mail to lheuer@emsa.ca.gov, fax (916) 324-2875, or telephone Luanne (916) 322-4336 x 242.

