

PROTOCOL FOR: Observation: of Patient in the ED

POLICY: To outline the process by which patients needing observation will be evaluated and treated prior to their discharge.

- PROCEDURE:**
1. The circumstances outlined below (see DECISION-MAKING PROCESS) will be used as a guideline for determining which patients need to be observed for a period of time prior to discharge from the ED.
 2. Unless otherwise indicated, the standard observation period is a minimum of 30 minutes; this observation time may be adjusted based on patient need and discretion of the nurse/physician team.
 3. Vital signs will be taken initially and frequency of reassessment will be determined by the nurse/physician, based on patient acuity and procedural/medication protocols and guidelines.

DESIRED PATIENT

OUTCOME: Patients who have been evaluated and treated in the ED will be medically stable prior to discharge.

DECISION-MAKING

PROCESS: The following are to be used as guidelines for patients who should be observed:

1. Patients receiving IV medications for conscious (moderate) sedation will be observed according to Conscious Sedation Protocol HAM 08-013. Vital signs must be stable for a minimum of 30 minutes prior to discharge.
2. Following the administration of parenteral narcotic analgesic or sedative, the patient should be observed for a minimum of 30 minutes. Vital signs should be re-assessed and stable prior to discharge.
3. Following parenteral administration of antibiotics the patient should be observed for 20 minutes.
4. Any patient who presents due to a fall, or is know to have fallen in the previous 24 hours. Vital signs should be re-assessed as stable prior to discharge. (Refer to Falls: Risk Assessment, Prevention Management and Treatment, Nursing Practice Manual).
5. Acute hypertension requiring treatment. BP must be obtained just prior to the administration of any new, one-time, stat or "now" dose of an antihypertensive drug. If the patient remains in the ED for continued observation, another BP should be obtained within 2 hours after the dose. (Refer to Hypertension protocol, Nursing Practice Manual).

The following situations also warrant an observation period, with documented re-assessment and stable vital signs prior to discharge:

6. All forcible impact car accident victims presenting with vague or suspicious symptoms or history.
7. Head injury patients with questionable symptoms.

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8. Following a seizure, especially in a non-epileptic patient.
9. Follow anaphylactic shock.
10. Pediatric patients receiving sedation.
11. Patients identified by ED attending or ED nurse as needing observational time in ED prior to discharge.

APPROVAL: ED Unit Review
Nursing Standards Committee

CREDENTIALS: RN, LPN (except Conscious Sedation Monitoring)

EFFECTIVE DATE: 3/93

REVISION DATES: 1/06, 12/07, 3/08

REVIEWED DATES: 9/08