Emergency Department: Basic Prerequisites for the Upgrade of the NHS

Georgios Charalambous MD, MSc, PhD
Surgeon, Director of the Emergency Department, Hippocration Hospital Athens, Greece
Coordinator MSc in Health Management, Frederick University, Cyprus

Correspondence: Georgios Charalambous MD, MSc, PhD, Surgeon, Director of Emergency Department, Hippocration Hospital Athens, Greece. E-mail: drcharalambous@yahoo.gr

Abstract

The Emergency Department is an autonomous hospital unit comprised of doctors, nurses and paramedics, who deliver emergency care on a 24-hour basis. It provides an interface between patients and their specialized treatment, as well as a point of contact between primary and tertiary care. The need for medical services has increased disproportionately to the available resources for medical care; a fact that has given rise to difficulties in maintaining the effective function of the Emergency Department. As a result, the provision of high standard services is not ensured.

In order to help establish and maintain the effective operation of the Emergency Department, new methods should be established which efficiently utilize existing and up-and-coming information and communication technologies. This will allow for the acceleration of the Department's operational procedures, more effective treatment of emergency cases, and ultimately assists in maintaining a high level of patient satisfaction. The expansion and development of specific services offered by the ED will also assist in the Department becoming a system of qualitative assessment for primary care. This would lead to a better outcome for emergency cases as a result of fast, spherical and effective treatment.

Key words: emergency departments, emergency medicine
number of cases with differing levels of complexity and severity requires the existence of a functionally and administratively autonomous unit within the hospital dedicated to such services (Askitopoulou 1991).

The immediate treatment and support of an emergency case in a comprehensive and continuous fashion presents distinct benefits for the Emergency Department for the following reasons:

1. It results in a better outcome for emergency cases in terms of survival chances and a decrease in morbidity rates in terms of duration and severity.
2. It restricts ambiguous admissions thus more properly utilizing the hospital’s infrastructure.
3. It decreases hospitalization time.
4. It greatly decreases the socioeconomic costs of an emergency case.
5. It constitutes a system of quality assessment for pre-hospital and hospital care as well as primary care.
6. It provides training in emergency medicine and emergency care for doctors and nursing staff.
7. It advances research in the subject of emergency medicine, in which time is of the essence.

Another parameter which becomes an immediate necessity for the appropriate organization and administration of Emergency Departments is the specialty of Emergency Medicine, the recognition of which has helped greatly the development of Emergency Departments (American College of Emergency Physicians 2008). Emergency Medicine in Europe traditionally consists of two ideologies:

i. The Anglo-American which uses specialized Emergency Departments and Emergency Medicine pre-hospital services with trained rescuers (paramedics).

ii. The French-German based on a very well-organized Emergency Medicine pre-hospital system including doctors and nurses, which has the basic setup of hospital Emergency Medicine (Anderson SP et al. 2006).

In recent years, the disparity between those two practices is decreasing as a result of the rapid development throughout Europe of independent Emergency Departments in clinical, financial and managerial terms (Tintinalli 2010). In the same manner that a severe injury requires treatment in specially focused sections of the hospital, an acute injury needs treatment in a specialized section such as the Emergency Department.

The expansion and development of services which are offered by the Emergency Department through Emergency Medicine practices aims at creating an Emergency Department that becomes a system of qualitative assessment for primary care. It also aims at a better outcome for emergency cases through a spherical, rapid and effective manner of stabilization and treatment (Agouridakis et al 1996). It further aspires to an upgrade of services provided in the emergency sector while protecting the hospital from ambiguous admissions.

The staffing of Emergency Departments with specialized medical and nursing personnel and their move towards autonomy will improve greatly their services, a fact that will have a resounding effect on society more than any other intervention in the NHS.

References


www.internationaljournalofcaringsciences.org