Infectious Disease Procedure

Introduction

The recent Ebola epidemic in West Africa and the isolated cases within the United States are a reminder of the concern for responder safety. There is an expectation that every first responder should regularly practice the standard of “universal” precautions before having patient contact. However, particularly concerning the Ebola Virus, the CDC has recommended that PSAPs take responsibility for screening callers for risk factors and notify responders of such before arrival on scene. This recommendation poses the question whether further efforts should be made to mitigate the risk of exposure to new or emerging infectious diseases. In light of this debate, PowerPhone has added an Infectious Disease Procedure to the Total Response System. The procedure supports extended questioning of callers when a heightened risk of an infectious disease is deemed to exist. Once dispatch has been initiated, the procedure should be used to establish the existence of infection risk. Responders can be advised of this risk prior to their arrival on scene so they can initiate appropriate protective precautions. The purpose of this document is to summarize the need for the procedure plus how and when it should be used.

Screening Calls For Infectious Diseases

Screening every caller for infectious disease may not be the most efficient use of resources as not every call poses the same level of risk to responders. Call takers need to be aware of the risk factors and symptoms that may suggest a potential infectious disease. The directive to invoke additional screenings should occur in response to the recognition of elevated risk by federal, state and local medical authorities.

In the event your PSAP is notified of an elevated risk, any call reporting the recent or sudden onset of symptoms should be screened for infectious diseases.

The following factors may suggest an increased risk of infectious disease:

- Recent residence in, or travel to, a country, state, or location where an outbreak is occurring (within the last 21 days);
- Signs and symptoms such as
  * high fever (greater than 101.5°F),
  * difficulty breathing,
  * coughing,
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- vomiting
- diarrhea
- aches and pains
- unexplained bleeding or bruising
- Recent contact or exposure to someone with a virus or flu-like symptoms;
- Direct handling of animals such as bats, rodents, or primates from a region where a foreign virus has been identified.

Infectious Diseases Procedure Use

1. The procedure can be added to existing four tab desk-top tablets or imported into CACH software. Inserts for existing tablet customers can be obtained from PowerPhone, CACH users will be contacted to arrange for the inclusion of the procedure in to their system database.

2. Screening for the infectious diseases using the procedure, should be used when;
   - an elevated risk of exposure to infectious disease is suspected
   or
   - when deemed necessary by federal, state and local medical authorities.

3. The procedure is not a diagnostic tool. It’s purpose is to establish the existence of infectious disease risk factors so that responders, dispatched to the scene, can be alerted to take appropriate protective precautions.

4. The procedure should always be referenced in conjunction with a protocol (Chief Complaint) such as Sick Person. Use the Chief Complaint script to determine a dispatch recommendation first as you would normally do.

5. When initiating dispatch make sure responders are aware that addition screening is occurring, then move to the Infectious Disease procedure.

6. If necessary, reassure the caller, that the questions you are asking are a precaution to protect responders, the patient and everyone at the scene.

7. Immediately update responders with the answers to the screening questions so they can take appropriate precautions.

8. Refer, as necessary to any additional local policies and procedures required by your agency.
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This procedure should be used to provide additional screening questions for conditions that may pose a risk to scene and responder safety. It should be used when an elevated risk of exposure to infectious disease has been identified and when deemed necessary by federal, state and local medical authorities.

Additional screening check list

1. Does the patient have abdominal pain?
   ➔ If YES, is he/she vomiting or having diarrhea?
2. Does the patient have a deep cough and/or a persistent cough?
   ➔ If YES, has he/she been coughing up phlegm?
3. Is the patient having any unexplained bleeding or open sores?
4. Does the patient have swollen or reddened eyes?
5. Does the patient have a high temperature or fever?
   ➔ If YES, has their temperature been taken and do you know what it was?

Advice to caller

• Any combination of the symptoms in the screening check list may suggest the potential for an infectious disease.
• Responders should be notified of the existence of an elevated risk of exposure BEFORE their arrival on scene.

• The caller should be advised to avoid direct contact with the patient if at all possible before responders arrive and to instruct others to also stay away.
• If the caller is unwilling or unable to do this, use the instructions below.

1. Avoid contact with bodily fluids.
2. Ask anyone nearby to stay away from the patient.
3. Allow him/her to rest in a comfortable position until help arrives.
4. Do not give him/her anything to eat or drink.
5. If he/she is vomiting or drooling, turn onto their side if they are not able to breathe normally.
   • If necessary go to [Recovery - Stabilize Neck] procedure
6. Does the patient have a severe headache or other body aches?
7. Has the patient traveled outside of the United States or Canada recently (within the last 3 weeks)?
   ➤ If YES, do you know which country/countries they visited?
   ➤ If the region visited is experiencing a known Ebola outbreak:
     a. Did the patient have any contact with bats or nonhuman primates, including body fluids or meat products from these animals?
8. Has the patient recently been in contact with anyone suspected of having a virus, infectious disease or foreign illness?
   ➤ If YES, do you know what it was?

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Recovery - Stabilize Neck