

News from the State EMS Council (SEMSCO) – February 2005

1. The Medical Standards Committee performed a standing takedown on the selective cervical spinal immobilization protocol, sending the whole thing back to committee for revision. Oh so close it was! Our crystal ball says the next draft will resemble PHTLS spinal immobilization algorithms. In any case, the current proposal would have dramatically increased the number of spines immobilized in the prehospital environment, quite contrary to the original purpose. We'll see what happens next.
2. Specialty Care Transport (SCT) is making a return visit, and not a very friendly one, at that. See if you can figure this out. The Medical Standards committee declared SCT too specialized to be governed by a statewide standard protocol set. Now, they have dismissed a proposed Finger Lakes Regional SCT protocol set as not meeting statewide standards. Go figure. Perhaps the Vatican will issue SCT Protocols.
3. EMS providers in Suffolk County have appealed the dispatch crew confirmation and mutual aid protocol issued by the Suffolk County REMAC and REMSCO. Providers question the authority of a REMSCO to issue protocols for dispatch and mutual aid. A SEMAC Appeal Committee is being formed that will include legal counsel from DOH. After deciding how they will hear the appeal, the group should meet in conjunction with the March SEMAC meeting and (hopefully) render a decision in May. Local, national, and international news media continue to blast Suffolk County providers for long response times with no clear, cohesive solution in sight.
4. Designation of stroke centers by DOH is proceeding, although not quite as phast as many hospitals would like to see. The Bureau of EMS will soon distribute a revised stroke protocol recommending transport of patients with suspected strokes to the closest NYS DOH designated Stroke Center (if the time from symptom onset to ED arrival is less than 2 hours). So you are current on which hospitals are designated DOH Stroke Centers, the Bureau will begin posting these on their website.
5. It official! Aeromedical services in New York will soon be allowed to fly with fentanyl on board. A two-year pilot program may lead to permission for fentanyl use by ground-based services as well. Of note regarding the decision to allow fentanyl in the field by the Bureau of Narcotic Enforcement (BNE): medications may be approved for use by the Bureau even when their intended use does not fall within FDA approved purposes. Yup, your eyes haven't failed you – BNE is the new (apparently sexier) name for the old Bureau of Controlled Substances (BCS). I'll bet they're all getting new shirts and jackets, too.
6. The January 2005 NYS Written Certification exams were administered by PSI, the new testing contractor. By all reports, it was smooth sailing. On-Site Scoring (OSS) got speedier with an average scan time of less than 20 seconds per student. Certification cards were ready to mail at the typical 4 week mark, and will most likely get out sooner in future exams due to greater efficiency of the new vendor. Starting with March 2005 exams, OSS will be offered at all three sites for every exam (rather than on a rotating basis as in the past). One change just implemented: CICs can no longer look at a copy of the written exam. DOH made this decision with a great deal of consideration, ultimately finding it critical for the protection of the written exam integrity.

7. Yowza! It looks like the national EMS scope of practice folks may need to get back to their drawing board if comments from New York were any reflection on those from elsewhere. Stay tuned for information on future developments.
8. If you haven't visited the "Help Is Here" EMS history exhibit at the NYS Museum in Albany, you have until September 11, 2005 for this once in a lifetime opportunity. The State Museum is open everyday except Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Years from 9:30 AM to 5 PM. For further information, call 518-474-5877 or check their web site at: www.nysm.nysed.gov.
9. Albany Fire Department received approval last December for BLS providers in their (REMO) region to utilize glucometers. At least we all thought the approval was for the REMO Region only. In actuality, their demonstration project was intended to forge the way for statewide approval of BLS providers using glucometers when endorsed by Regional protocol. This February, SEMAC and SEMSCO approved the concept statewide. Thank you Albany.
10. You can bet that St. Patty's Day won't see a renegotiation of HCRA (New York State's Health Care Reform Act). We can only hope that HCRA is renewed before snow flies next fall. It certainly wouldn't hurt to remind elected officials of your fondness for the EMS dedicated fund portion of HCRA that allocates over \$23 million annually to EMS Training, Regional Councils, Program Agencies, and the Bureau of EMS.
11. If you've been watching the musical chairs at the State Health Department of late, you probably know that David Wollner from the Governor's Office has been named to replace Wayne Olsten as Director of Office of Health Systems Management (OHSM). No news on a replacement for Fred Heigel, who retired as Director of the Bureau of Hospital and Primary Care Services. David Wollner has a broad base of Emergency Services knowledge; many of you know him from your EMS related communications with the Governors office in past years.
12. Here's a bit of written exam trivia for those involved in training courses. When DOH does not receive a copy of the practical skills exam summary sheet with the written certification exam materials, they hold students certification cards until the course sponsor sends in the practical skills exam summary sheet. It pays to have the CIC submit a copy of the course practical skills exam sheet to the written exam proctor!
13. Quite abruptly, the National Registry of EMTs (NREMT) has taken their practical skills administrative manuals off their web site and out of general circulation. Translation: now, only the National Registry Practical Exam Proctor knows the pass/fail criteria for each practical exam station. That spells trouble for New York State where the National Registry Practical Skills Exam is generally considered equivalent to the NYS Practical. It seems very likely, no; make that almost certain, that DOH will cease to accept National Registry Practical Skills Exams in lieu of good old NYS Practical Stations. Trouble brewing here...stay tuned for a decision shortly.
14. Electronic PCRs will some day become a reality in New York. The Evaluation Committee of SEMSCO has decided to study the issue more closely and hopes to develop data set standards for State, Regional, and Local levels use. The State seems poised to turn responsibility for electronic data collection over to the Regions, although this is purely in the theoretical stage at this juncture.

15. FACE (Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation) is a Federal Program administered by the States to investigate work related fatalities and provide preventative guidance to industry sectors on prevention. The FACE folks in NYS plan to launch an outreach to EMS in hopes of extending their services more diversely throughout the state. Look for a new FACE soon.
16. For you socialites, the PIER (Public Information Education and Relations) Committee wants to reserve a few spots on your 2005 calendar. EMS Week is May 15-21. The EMS Memorial Service will be held on May 18th at 11:00 AM in Albany. Annual NYS EMS Award Nominations are due to the State Council by August 1. Remaining SEMAC and SEMSCO meetings for 2005 are March 29-30, May 24-25, September 20-21, and December 13-14.
17. An interesting motion initiated by the PIER Committee was approved by SEMSCO directing the Chair to write the Health Commissioner requesting her support for legislation requiring certification in CPR to graduate from High School in New York State.
18. Last, but not least, the Bureau issued revised rates for EMS Instructor Training Courses conducted during 2005 reflecting a request from the SEMSCO Finance Committee in hopes of increasing instructor training courses. The Bureau intends to study the effect of the funding increases as well as examine actual costs of conducting instructor level training.

These notes respectfully prepared by Mike McEvoy, PhD, RN, CCRN, REMT-P who is the 2005 Chair of the State EMS Council where he represents the NYS Association of Fire Chiefs. Mike is EMS Coordinator for Saratoga County, a paramedic for Clifton Park-Halfmoon Ambulance Corps, a firefighter and chief medical officer for West Crescent Fire Department. At Albany Medical Center, Mike works as a clinical specialist in the Cardiac Surgical ICUs, Chairs the Resuscitation Committee, and teaches pulmonary and critical care medicine at Albany Medical College. Contact Mike at McEvoyMike@aol.com.