



Regional Emergency Medical Organization



1653 CENTRAL AVENUE • ALBANY, NY 12205-4092

(518) 464-5097

FAX (518) 464-5099

WEBSITE: www.remo-ems.com

E-MAIL: remohmvi@nycap.rr.com

**REMAC Advisory: 2006-06
Proper Labeling of Patient Records & Specimens**

October 4, 2006

As medical professionals, we all have an obligation to make every attempt to improve quality of care and patient safety. One area that still causes possible concern and confusion is the handoff of pre-hospital blood tubes from EMS to emergency department staff. If left unlabeled, there is a potential risk for a blood tube to be confused with a tube from another patient, with potentially deleterious results. To ensure continuity of patient care, it is imperative that any medical specimen left with a patient is properly labeled. This includes, but is not limited to: EKGs and blood specimens.

Prehospital blood draws are greatly appreciated by the emergency department staff. Having blood samples available from the initial IV stick enhances the emergency department's ability to care for patients because no additional time is lost drawing blood and the hospital may receive lab results 15-30 minutes faster because of your hard work. By working as a team, we can ensure optimal patient care and safety.

Emergency departments have changed the way that they draw labs and prepare them in order to decrease the risk of errors. Lab tubes must be labeled at the bedside after confirming the patient's identification. When blood tubes are brought in by EMS, they often have no identifying information on them. This prevents the hospital from utilizing those tubes because they cannot guarantee the patient they came from. Some simple changes in pre-hospital operating practices can solve this dilemma and will better serve our mutual patients.

REMO Procedure for Blood Tube Labeling & Handoffs:

1. After lab tubes are filled from the IV site, place them in a lab bag (plastic bag).
2. Write the patient's name and date of birth on the bag.
3. Tape the lab bag to the IV bag.
4. Upon arrival at the ED, notify the receiving nurse that bloods have been drawn.
5. If available, label blood tubes with hospital stickers prior to turning them over to the nurse.
6. If no IV fluids are initiated, hand the labeled lab bag directly to the receiving nurse.
7. Document the handoff in your PCR.
8. Do NOT leave blood tubes on a counter or give them to anyone who is not a licensed healthcare provider.

Michael W. Dailey, MD
Regional Medical Director