

Out-of-Hospital Care Provider Policy

Title: Treatment of Patients on Oral Hypoglycemic Medications

Effective Date: January 12, 1999

Policy:

All patients for whom out-of-hospital care providers have been dispatched shall be cared for according to the New York State and WREMS Adult and Pediatric treatment protocols AND offered transportation to an appropriate receiving facility. This is especially critical for diabetics taking oral hypoglycemic agents who respond to intravenous Dextrose (D₁₀W or D₅₀W) after experiencing a hypoglycemic episode. These patients must be encouraged to be transported to an emergency department for further evaluation, treatment and follow-up because of the risk of delayed recurrent hypoglycemic episodes from the prolonged-acting oral agents.

Procedure:

Oral hypoglycemic medications lower blood glucose by stimulating the release of insulin from the pancreas. Non-insulin dependent diabetics frequently take these oral medications in the morning; and medication levels appear in the bloodstream approximately one hour after ingestion. The half-life of these medications is long-ranging from 17 to 36 hours. Unfortunately, the half-life of D₁₀W or D₅₀W is very brief. Consequently, the D₁₀W or D₅₀W initially corrects the hypoglycemia, but the effects of the medication last much longer than the dextrose and these patients often experience subsequent hypoglycemic episodes. These patients almost always require admission to a hospital for 24 hours to receive intravenous D₅W administration and further monitoring.

Patients must **NEVER** be advised that emergency department care is not necessary or otherwise discouraged from being transported. All diabetic patients who are taking oral glucose-lowering medications should be strongly encouraged to be transported to an emergency department. However, it is recognized that many hypoglycemic diabetic patients often refuse transport after responding to treatment with D₁₀W or D₅₀W. These patients may be allowed to sign-off against medical advise if they have been given informed consent, are of sound mind, and only after medical direction has been contacted as outlined by the WREMS Refusal of Evaluation/Stabilization/Transport Policy. **Please note that patients taking oral hypoglycemic medications are at significant risk of recurrent hypoglycemia, which may result in death, and must be told about these risks!**

General Notes:

Some of the more common oral hypoglycemic medications are:

Amaryl Tablets
DiaBets Tablets
Diabinese Tablets
Glucophage Tablets
Glucotrol Tablets
Glucotrol XL Extended Release Tablets
Glynase Tablets
Micronase Tablets
Precose Tablets