

Commentary

Ambulance is for life: a call for bridging the knowledge gap among the masses

Tarique Quadir Lakhiar, Zeeshan Noor Shaikh, Umair Maqbool*, Mazhar Iqbal, Lutaf Ali Mangrio

Sindh Integrated Emergency and Health Services (SIEHS), Health Department, Government Of Sindh, Karachi, Pakistan

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*Correspondence:

Umair Maqbool,

E-mail: umair.maqbool@siehs.org

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ABSTRACT

Essential awareness among the masses about the ambulance usage is pertinent. Lack of knowledge and basic understanding for accessing the ambulance services is liable to reduce resources and cause delay in provision of appropriate treatment. Similarly, prompt management and timely intervention to any emergency provides considerable assistance to respond and address any sudden health uncertainty that arises from accidental health conditions and crises. However, knowledge and basic understanding about utilizing the emergency health services is crucial among masses. This provides the capability to the individual about recognizing the role of emergency response services and gives a sense of understanding about the appropriate usage of ambulance. Thus, in this context, there is a model called medical priority dispatch system (MPDS) a globally recognized method that helps in emergency medical services (EMS) to determine the intensity of the medical condition and accidents before dispatching the assistance. The following paper is aimed to inculcate the knowledge and address the misperceptions among the masses for attaining the facilitation of ambulance services which responds in accordance to MPDS model.

Keywords: Ambulance, Emergency, EMS, MPDS, SIEHS

INTRODUCTION

Indeed, the provision of emergency medical services (EMS) in any community setting comes with immense responsibility. Professionals who have been at the forefront in the assurance of deliverance of these services are incredibly aware of the impediments and challenges that come alongside while performing this noble and rigorous duty. However, curtailing and addressing those complications in the first place cannot only potentially reduce the barriers of the emergency response workforce but can also cater to the immediate assistance of medical necessity for any sufferer and afflicted individual.¹ Notwithstanding, to make it certain and ensure it is an attainable objective, it is utmost imperative that

ambulance literacy and the pertinent knowledge about its utilization should primarily prevail among the public.

The concept of life-saving ambulances has almost remained nascent in Pakistan. If we flip the pages of our history, we will come to find that it was the late Abdul Sattar Edhi who laid the foundation for the country's first-ever ambulance service. The sole objective of this endeavor was to facilitate those penurious segments among us who could not afford to transport their loved ones and patients to the health facilities through their own vehicles. However, with that being said, the concept of a carrier ambulance and a life-saving ambulance is still unknown to the larger proportions of the population. This makes it imperative to countries like Pakistan which have

decentralized ambulance systems, to instill patient knowledge as to when to call an ambulance and which service to opt for assistance at the eleventh hour. In the following points, it is vividly discussed to address the general misconception in the public about the utilization of ambulance services.

AMBULANCE AS A LIFE-SAVING INTERVENTION

Since, its inception it has been a generally perceived notion, especially in low-middle countries like ours, that ambulance usage is mostly limited to transporting the demised individuals, which is truly not the case. Such pre-assumptions due to scant knowledge and awareness create significant knowledge-lacuna among the general populace for understanding the cruciality of EMS. Thus, first and foremost, it is pertinent to construe that ambulances are life-saving interventions that have a pivotal role in saving countless lives and instilling the hope of hopeless. Hence, mass enlightenment about this very fact is important to prevail for the assurance of purposeful usage of ambulance services. On that account, it is pertinent to emphasize the importance of community awareness initiatives that can educate the common man about this all-important community resource.

PRIORITIZATION OF LIFE-THREATENING EMERGENCIES

As the ambulances primarily perform to mitigate and address the life-threatening situations, thus, to respond to cases of urgent and immediate attention is always of significant importance. Similarly, the cases that seem evident with a less severe nature are overseen once the acute emergency cases are responded to with the required capacity and resources.² Therefore, having said this all, the appropriate allocation of resources and their apt utilization to mitigate life-threatening situations is equally essential. Further, as professionals dealing with hundreds of medical emergency cases on round-the-clock junctures, we aim to greatly prioritize and strive for robust action to foremostly deal with the cases that require immediate attention. Thenceforth, giving almost equal importance to cases of a less severe nature.

ADHERENCE TO THE MPDS MODEL AND PROTOCOLS

In our EMS, we follow the MPDS protocols, which is known as the globally recognized triage system for medical emergencies.³ Adherence to this system and protocol provides the leverage for assessing the severity of each emergency case and then dispatching the required and appropriate level of medical assistance. While, the questioning process during emergency calls may feel intrusive to some callers, however, based on the guidelines and protocols, these questions, help to establish the correct observation for deciding and dispatching the most suitable type of medical assistance/ambulance and ensuring the preparedness of

staff en-route to the caller's locality.⁴ Hence, it is greatly urged to the masses to demonstrate restraint amid such crucial phases. Accurate and reliable information acquired through the caller aids to a great extent in optimizing our response to medical emergencies. Further, pre-arrival instructions on call, which are provided in accordance with MPDS protocols can significantly help improve patient outcomes.⁵

SOUNDING OF HOOTERS: A DELICATE BALANCE

Furthermore, it is important to highlight, that sounding of hooters on ambulances is only reserved in extreme traffic situations. Continuous hooter sounds can create a chaotic situation on roads leaving the general public in panic. To us, hooters are considered as a last and final resort as our preference is to keep side lights activated to indicate our presence and urgency. In general, the common public provides a way to ambulances, however, there are numerous instances where exceptions and uncertainties occur.

FINAL TAKEAWAY

Undoubtedly, education and mass-awareness endeavors can ensure greater understanding and cooperation among all road users to facilitate safer and more efficient ambulance transit. Thus, prioritizing ambulance literacy within our communities is essential in advancing emergency response efforts.

CONCLUSION

It is relevant to highlight that general population should have awareness about the purpose of ambulance which are accessible as lifesaving interventions in the times of sudden health adversity and crises. This will not only facilitate the patients but also the general public about the apt utilization of emergency response services. Thus, being the organization, Sindh Integrated Emergency and Health Services (SIEHS), the recognized ambulance services which operates on MPDS model across the entire province of Sindh, Pakistan, the sole ambition is prevail knowledge among the relevant stakeholders, policy makers and also draw attention of the several segment of mass media to be apprised of the fact of the functions and priorities on which organization operates its ambulance to assist the huge segment of population of their region alongside the government based health-facilities.

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