

# A Refereed Academic Journal For EMS

MICHAEL R. GUNDERSON, REMT-P  
EDITOR

Acute Care Foundation, Palm Harbor Fire Department, Pinellas County EMS

*The refereed medical journal plays a vital role in medicine, providing a respected forum of research and academic debate. Acceptance of scholarly papers for publication requires compliance to standards of academic quality such as appropriate research study design, methodology, hypothesis testing and bibliographic referencing. A paper is first screened by a journal's editorial staff. Meeting with their approval, it is then sent out for a formal academic review by referees – highly respected researchers and clinicians in their particular disciplines. Their critique and commentary are published along with the response and closing comments of the authors, immediately following the original paper. Through this process, the true merits and significance of the paper to the discipline are explored.*

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) are in a major transition. Administrative trends are shifting away from increasing the numbers of ambulances and critical care beds toward the refinement and sophistication of cost-effective services. Medically, there is a growing need for research and academics in EMS. The EMS community requires an interdisciplinary forum, encompassing the entire spectrum of EMS care from the field into the critical care units. The *Tampa Bay EMS Journal* is the first step in an innovative program of academics and continuing medical education for EMS.

The *Tampa Bay EMS Journal* is a unique publication. It provides EMS with a journal in a formal academic format. A major objective of this project is to catalyze development of much needed prehospital research and academic development. It is a regional publication, currently encompassing Hillsborough, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk, and Manatee counties. A regional scope permits discussions with references to specific agencies and hospitals. For example, a discussion of trauma care can address the encatchment areas of individual hospitals and the destination protocols of specific prehospital agencies. This approach will make the *Journal* an excellent forum in which regional concerns may be debated, where no such forum currently exists.

The project is being conducted under the auspices of a non-profit organization, the Acute Care Foundation. The Acute Care Foundation was started by a small group of local emergency medical technicians and paramedics wanting to develop collaboration between different agencies and hospitals, across political and territorial borders. This lack of interagency and prehospital-inhospital collaboration is a major obstacle to the academic growth of EMS. A key to resolving this problem

is effective professional communication. It is a mechanism through which interagency collaboration may be developed.

## FUNDING

A financial base to initiate this project will be sought through sponsorships, grants and donations. The recurring costs for printing and expenses associated with production of the *Journal* will be met with revenues from advertising. So long as it is financially practical, a specific target audience will receive the *Journal* without subscription fees. This subscription free target distribution includes all area prehospital EMS substations, their medical directors, administrators and training officers, emergency departments and critical care units, their head nurses and directors, in-service education departments, EMS training facilities, and the University of South Florida Colleges of Medicine, Nursing, and Public Health. Additional courtesy distributions will be made to area public officials, the State EMS Office, and EMS related professional organizations. This provides exposure of the *Journal* throughout the system. It assures a communication link. This approach also makes the *Journal* a very attractive advertising medium. Those persons having the major influences on purchasing decisions are within the target distribution. Paid subscriptions to the *Journal* will be available through membership in the Acute Care Foundation.

## PUBLICATION LOGISTICS

Another unique aspect of the *Journal* is the technology used to produce it. The *Journal* uses "desktop publishing" tools to replace the traditional methods and expense of typesetting and paste-up. Draft pages are produced with a laser printer. Final pages are made using a new generation of phototypesetting devices. This equipment is currently borrowed and rented. Thus, access to the *Journal* staff is very limited. Acquisition of some components of this system will dramatically improve its production efficiency.

The articles are entered into personal computer word processors by each author or supervising contributing editor. The text is then transmitted via modem to a computer information network as electronic mail. The editorial staff then retrieves the articles into their personal computers for editing and review. After acceptance for publication, the articles are

sent by electronic mail to a computer system used for electronic typesetting and layout. The final composed page information is again transmitted by modem to a phototypesetting service for production of camera-ready images. These logistics have helped to make it feasible to produce a publication of professional quality at a reasonable cost.

## ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS

Access to computer information networks offering electronic mail is obtained by local call through hundreds of telephone exchanges in the U.S. and abroad. These networks also provide facilities for electronic forums that are sometimes referred to as bulletin board services (BBS) or special interest groups. Many such forums include general medicine and EMS. Negotiations will be conducted with these services to provide on-line publishing of general interest articles from the *Tampa Bay EMS Journal*, as is now done with many other magazines and newspapers. This will give immediate national and limited international distribution of the *Journal*. Through this electronic medium, discussions and debates in the *Journal* may continue on-line and be incorporated into subsequent printed issues. These networks can also facilitate live on-line medical conferences with participation of invited commentators. Formal publication of these on-line proceedings may follow in both the electronic and printed versions of the *Journal*.

The interagency collaboration initiated by the *Journal* may also be used to establish a network of area cable and microwave TV systems. This network will be used to broadcast continuing medical education programs and symposia for EMS. One of the first such programs planned for broadcast is the *Protocol Roundtable*, where panels of EMS clinicians and appropriate specialty physicians will draft specific emergency treatment protocols. This will include a review of current protocols of selected area agencies and an up-to-date review of the medical literature. Acquisition of protocol examples from outside the Tampa Bay area may be solicited through the computer BBS networks. The prototype protocols developed in the *Protocol Roundtable* will be published with complete bibliographic references. Agencies may then use the prototype and its bibliography as an aid in their own on-going protocol revision efforts. Programs on the EMS television network may also include rebroadcast of grand rounds, lectures, classes, and commercially produced education tapes. Negotiations will also be made to obtain satellite access for expansion into a nationwide EMS continuing medical education television network.

A program is under development to award continuing

education units (CEU) to physicians, paramedics, nurses and EMT's for reading major *Journal* papers, viewing educational programs on the television network, or participating in the on-line computer conferences. For prehospital EMS, accreditation for CEU will be sought from individual medical directors, the Florida Association of EMS Medical Directors and the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians. Nursing CEU will be sought through collaborating hospitals and institutions. Continuing medical education credits for physicians will be sought through the Continuing Medical Education Office at the University of South Florida College of Medicine.

The *Tampa Bay EMS Journal* is a prototype in what is hoped to become a much larger network of sister publications for other regions throughout Florida and the U.S. These sister publications would share materials of general interest but retain exclusive publication of papers and proceedings of a primarily regional interest.

## SUMMARY

The many components of this project, including printed and electronic publications, emergency medical television programming, symposia sponsorship, and CEU programs, will be coordinated by the Acute Care Foundation. Its objective is stimulation of formal academic activity in EMS with collaboration between the prehospital and in-hospital sectors. Funding will be developed through grants, advertising, memberships and individual donations. The project is economically and logistically feasible through the use of new technology in personal computers and computer networks.

Participation is sought from EMS and critical care professionals at all levels - from the field, emergency departments, trauma centers, critical care units, continuing education departments and the academic community. The *Tampa Bay EMS Journal* and its associated projects are a reflection of the interest and dedication to EMS in this region. It requires your participation and financial support - consider it an investment in our EMS community.

## Acknowledgement

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