



## Portage County EMS Patient Care Guidelines



# Determination of Death/ Termination of Resuscitation

### Note:

- Cardiac arrest patients will receive full resuscitation efforts based on current guidelines.
- Patients that do not respond to these efforts will generally not be transported to the hospital.
- All efforts should be made to not transport a non-salvageable patients in cardiac arrest.
- In a multiple-patient or mass casualty incident, triage patients using multiple patient triage procedures.

## ALL LEVELS

EMS personnel may cease or withhold resuscitation efforts when the following circumstances are present upon arrival:

- Presence of Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) orders
  - Valid Wisconsin Do Not Resuscitate wristband
  - Valid advance directive form such as a Living Will, Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST) or other health care facility documentation of a DNR order.
  - The patient's Power of Attorney for Health Care (POA-HC) directs cessation of resuscitation and EMS has no reason to suspect the patient has revoked the POA-HC or that the agent is not acting consistently with the prior wishes of the patient.
    - Document the name of the POA-HC
  - Direct order from medical control physician.
- Presence of irreversible biological death
  - Decomposition
  - Rigor mortis
  - Dependant lividity (dependent mottled, bluish appearance) with
    - Pulselessness AND
    - Apnea AND
    - No shockable rhythm
- Traumatic injuries
  - Injuries incompatible with life such as decapitation or transected torso
  - Bodily position not compatible with life (i.e. contortion)
    - Efforts should be made to document absence of vital signs
  - Penetrating trauma
    - No pupil response
    - No spontaneous movement
    - No shockable rhythm or organized EKG activity in two leads
  - Blunt trauma
    - Pulseless AND
    - Apneic AND
    - No shockable rhythm
  - In a multiple-patient or mass casualty incident these patients are triaged BLACK.

*Contact Medical Control for the following:*

- A physician on scene wants to direct continuing or discontinuing resuscitation in conflict with the direction this protocol or medical control gives you
- Other circumstances of obvious death not listed above
- Determination of death confirmation

## **INTERMEDIATE/ PARAMEDIC**

EMS personnel may terminate resuscitation in the following circumstances

- Medical cardiac arrest
  - The options available to you under the *Cardiac Arrest Guidelines* have been exhausted AND
  - 20 minutes of ACLS care have been provided AND
  - All three of the following are true
    - There has been no return of spontaneous circulation
    - The arrest was not witnessed by EMS personnel
    - No shockable rhythm was witnessed
- Traumatic cardiac arrest
  - Arrest witnessed by EMS personnel
    - Perform full resuscitation for 15 minutes and reassess
    - If patient remains in arrest, terminate efforts

*Contact Medical Control for the following:*

- Termination recommendations for patients that do not meet all the criteria

Other post-termination procedures

- Document time that resuscitation efforts were terminated.
- Contact Coroner. Do not disturb potential evidence.
- Remain with deceased until released by law enforcement or coroner.
- Assist surviving loved ones with contacting spiritual support, family or grief resources as needed.

References

- National Association of EMS Physicians and American College of Surgeons Committee on Trauma. "Position Statement: Termination of resuscitation for adult traumatic cardiopulmonary arrest." *Prehospital Emergency Care* 2012; 16:571
- Morrison LJ, et al. "Validation of a universal prehospital termination of resuscitation clinical prediction rule for advanced and basic life support providers." *Resuscitation* (2009), doi:10.1016/j.resuscitation.2008.11.014
- Hopson MD, Laura R, et al. "Guidelines for withholding or termination of resuscitation in prehospital traumatic cardiopulmonary arrest: A joint position paper from the National Association of EMS Physicians Standards and Clinical Practice Committee and the American College of Surgeons Committee on Trauma." *Prehospital Emergency Care* Jan/Mar 2003

- “Prehospital termination of life support under the medial direction of Saint Michael’s emergency physicians (Guidelines).” Ethics Committee, Saint Michael’s Hospital

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