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To: Ohio EMS providers and EMS medical directors
From: Carol A. Cunningham, M.D., FAAEM, FACEP
State Medical Director, Ohio Department of Public Safety, Division of EMS
Date: May 20, 2015
RE: Management of Epistaxis by Ohio EMS providers

At the request of the Emergency Medical, Fire, and Transportation Services (EMF/TS) Board, I am communicating their clarification of the Ohio EMS scope of practice for the management of epistaxis (nosebleeds).

The initial management of epistaxis is primarily the application of pressure applied firmly to the distal half of the tip of the nose. This maneuver places direct pressure on Kiesselbach's plexus, the site where four intranasal arteries join together, which controls the bleeding in the majority of patients with epistaxis. The administration of intranasal medications, e.g. vasoconstricting decongestant solutions, is within the Ohio EMS scope of practice for the advanced emergency medical technician and the paramedic if authorized by the medical director and with a written protocol.

Although hemorrhage control is within the scope of practice for all levels of Ohio EMS certification, the use of invasive hemostatic devices, specifically nasal tampons, are not within the Ohio EMS scope of practice. An examination of the internal nasal passages should always be performed by the emergency department medical personnel to attempt to identify the bleeding site. In addition, this examination may also identify intranasal foreign bodies or abnormal intranasal neoplasms (tissue masses or tumors) for which the placement of a nasal tampon would be relatively contraindicated and potentially detrimental to the patient.

For external hemorrhage control as a general topic, the application of direct pressure, topical hemostatic agents, and the application of tourniquets are within the Ohio EMS scope of practice. Authorization from the medical director and a written protocol are required.

Mission Statement

"to save lives, reduce injuries and economic loss, to administer Ohio's motor vehicle laws and to preserve the safety and well being of all citizens with the most cost-effective and service-oriented methods available."