

Comments for Emergency Medical Services Education Agenda 2050

The NETEC EMS Workgroup, composed of out-of-hospital special pathogens subject matter experts, appreciates the opportunity to provide comments for the planned re-envision of the 2000 EMS Education Agenda for the Future, along with updating the NHTSA EMS Educational Standards and EMS Core Content. What significant changes will impact the EMS education system in the next 25 years? As the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated, EMS clinicians are at the forefront of detecting and identifying patients with potential emerging infectious diseases (Al Amiry, 2021). Without proper isolation procedures for high-consequence infectious diseases (HCID), EMS clinicians are also at risk of becoming infected themselves and potentially endangering others in their community (Richey, 2021).

We acknowledge that high consequence infectious diseases (HCIDs), such as Ebola and Marburg, are rarely encountered in the United States. However, these HCIDs pose significant risks to the public and the EMS workforce. Additionally, increasing global mobility can amplify the spread of these pathogens (Rosello, 2017). The 2021 EMS Educational Standards document aptly notes regarding the role of EMS providers: “Public health prevention and pandemic preparedness efforts are **essential** functions” (NHTSA, 2021). Nurses, physicians, and other healthcare professionals are trained to recognize and respond to special pathogens (Sulmonte, 2024). We assert that all EMS clinicians should likewise have a baseline knowledge to **identify** potential HCID patients, properly **isolate** these patients, and appropriately **inform** public health authorities and receiving facilities. Further, we assert that EMS personnel should be able to safely implement a life-saving intervention for these patients when needed.

The latest iteration of the EMS Educational Standards describes that EMS clinicians should be aware of patients who may have an infectious disease (EMR level) and the ability to assess and manage them (EMT level and higher). The NETEC EMS Workgroup asserts there is an opportunity to add some nuance and specificity to these standards, recognizing that HCIDs are treated differently than more commonly encountered infectious diseases (such as influenza) due to their high morbidity and mortality.

The development of the National Special Pathogen System (NSPS) highlights a coordinated approach to responding to high consequence infectious disease outbreaks (ASPR, 2021). EMS clinicians are a key component of the NSPS (Mukherjee, 2022).

The NETEC EMS Workgroup recommends that NHTSA adopt the following changes to the EMS Core Content.

- Add sub-content to “Infectious and Communicable Diseases” to include “Special Pathogens” or “High Consequence Infectious Diseases”

The NETEC EMS Workgroup recommends that NHTSA adopt the following changes to the EMS Educational Standards.

- Page 28 (Educational Standard: Preparatory). Consider adding “Special Pathogens” to the listing of “Workforce Safety” to all levels
- Page 29 (Educational Standard: Preparatory). Consider adding “Recognition of hazardous waste” to all levels
- Page 32 (Educational Standard: Public Health). Consider adding “Communication with the public health authority about suspected HCIDs” to all levels
- Page 36 (Educational Standard: Scene Assessment). Consider adding “Screening for risk of HCID by EMD or other means”
- Page 41 (Educational Standard: Medicine – Infectious Disease). Consider adding “How to identify a patient who may have a high consequence infectious disease.” to all levels
- Page 41 (Educational Standard: Medicine – Infectious Disease). Consider adding “How to isolate a patient suspected of having a high consequence infectious disease” to all levels
- Page 41 (Educational Standard: Medicine – Infectious Disease). Consider adding “How to inform others, including public health about patients suspected of having a high consequence infectious disease” to all levels
- Page 41 (Educational Standard: Medicine – Infectious Disease). Consider adding “How to safely perform life-saving interventions for patients suspected of having a high consequence infectious disease” to all levels
- Page 41 (Educational Standard: Medicine – Infectious Disease). Expand education of “vaccine-preventable diseases” for all levels (not just AEMT and Paramedic levels)

References

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