Emergency Department to ICU Referral Guideline

This guideline has been produced to streamline referrals between the Emergency Department and the ICU. This will allow the ICU team the maximum time to make decisions about patient movements to create ICU bed space.

1) ICU referral should occur as soon as a patient is identified as being critically ill. This may well be before all investigations or resuscitation are complete.

2) An ICU consultant or delegated trainee should review the patient in the ED as soon as possible. If a delay is likely then this should communicated to ED staff.

3) The doctor carrying out the review should communicate to the ED staff whether:
   a. the patient is accepted as requiring ICU support:
      - Joint care continues until the patient is transferred from the ED to a critical care area

   b. more information is required to make admission decision:
      - Joint care continues until either the patient is admitted to a critical care area or ICU support is deemed inappropriate

   c. the patient does not require ICU support at the current time:
      - No further ICU input unless clinical condition changes

   d. ICU support is deemed not to be in the patient's best interests
      - ICU involvement limited to advice on end of life care

Please note:
- Joint care refers to care delivered by ED, ICU, anaesthetics and the admitting medical or surgical team. The ED consultant remains the co-ordinating consultant and retains overall responsibility until the patient is accepted by and appropriately handed over to the admitting team. Other teams (eg ICU, anaesthetics, medicine, surgery) will be required to offer expert opinion, specific skills (eg intubation, intra-hospital transfer etc) and practical help but should be co-ordinated by the ED consultant.

- Communication and Teamwork is the key to success

- The ICU bed state should not influence this process, although it may influence patient flow.

- Earlier referral will increase the volume of ICU referrals from the ED some of which will not require ICU admission

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