

« bodily handling of a patient and potentially managing distressed relatives. Dental teams should consider this when training and mentally prepare themselves to perform tasks and procedures which are far outside their normal scope of practice. Leadership of these teams will often require someone to be assertive and motivate their teams to perform these tasks with reassurance they are doing the right thing. First responders are rarely criticised for being over assertive but often fail to do tasks (such as removing a bra in cardiac arrest) due to lack of confidence and mental preparedness. Planning and training can help avoid this lack of assertion.

Share the mental model: include the team in decision making

Communication with the whole team is key. Checklists are really useful to optimise this and practical training should include them. The team leader should ensure that their thoughts and decisions are communicated with the team and encourage the team members to share their thoughts before making the final decision. Often the quiet team members will have a great idea but the team dynamics make it difficult for them to share this with the team leader.

6.0 Take notes

Whilst this may not be required, or may not be possible in the first few minutes, try and start taking notes that can be handed over as early as possible. These include timings and patients' previous medical history and medications. It is invaluable to ambulance teams to know what happened before and during the event as it will help guide their treatment and help decide on the appropriate patient pathway of care. The paramedics are part of the team, and facilitating their care of the patient is a sure way of improving outcomes.

7.0 Debriefing

Debrief and create honest feedback

When training medical professionals for medical emergencies and cardiopulmonary resuscitation it is advisable to use an experienced and credible instructor to deliver the training. It is known that significant cardiopulmonary resuscitation quality deficits exist among healthcare providers.¹⁰ Credible trainers can offer realistic simulations with useful feedback and debriefing, improving team performance. Effective debriefing of simulation has been shown to serve as a powerful tool to improve rescuer training and care for cardiac arrest patients.¹⁰

A true medical emergency is stressful for all concerned. A good plan should consider the mental health of the medical team at all times. The Resuscitation Council UK advise that serious events, including cardiac arrests, should always include a full 'debriefing' of staff. This allows them to reflect on the treatment given and permits discussion of whether anything might have been done differently.⁵ There are many guidelines on how best to do this but it is generally advisable that immediately post incident all staff are gathered together and given the opportunity to discuss the events and vocalise any issues or concerns they have as soon as possible. A more formal, structured debrief later may be required and learning points identified. Dealing with a medical emergency will affect all

staff members differently, and as with any such stressful situation it is always good to discuss our feelings in a non-judgemental manner.

8.0 Sedation

Specialist emergency medical training is essential

When a dental surgery offers more advanced care options, such as sedation, the RCUK recommends that a more advanced trainer, or attendance at a designated course may be appropriate.⁵ Intravenous sedation specifically includes the administration of anxiolytic drugs that may have complex, potentially serious, side effects. A specialist trainer, experienced in sedation (inhalation and IV), can offer

'True medical emergencies are challenging in every respect and will require all team members to step outside their comfort zone.'

training to manage these side effects and improve the confidence and ability of staff to help manage these events. The planning for dental emergencies will have to be modified to acknowledge these risks.

Conclusion

Medical emergencies may arise when least expected. By utilising these tips the dental team will be in the best position to deal with such events effectively and efficiently, optimising outcomes for patients. ■

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Notice of passing

It is with sadness that we report the death in late December 2023 of Louis Mackenzie of Selly Park, Birmingham. An obituary will follow. ✦