



# ONTARIO BASE HOSPITAL GROUP

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Ontario Paramedic Service Chiefs and Deputy Chiefs

**From:** Ontario Base Hospital Group

**Date:** May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020

**RE:** **Assessment of Patients with Possible COVID-19 Medical Directive – Auxiliary**

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COVID-19 has brought forward many challenges in the health care system, including in paramedicine. The healthcare system has been focused on keeping both clinical care providers, as well as patients safe during these unprecedented times. As part of pandemic planning there needs to be considerations for increases in paramedic call volumes, ED volumes and hospital occupancy. As such the “Assessment of Patients with Possible COVID-19 Medical Directive – Auxiliary” was developed to help identify low acuity 911 patients with possible or known COVID-19 who could be considered for release from paramedic care. The directive could allow paramedics to identify patients with lower acuity COVID-19 symptoms that could be released from care during a pandemic.

In a time of a pandemic, the benefits of releasing specific lower acuity 911 patients from paramedic care need to be weighed against the risk of leaving them at home. When the development of this directive was initiated, there was a greater concern for the system being overwhelmed by COVID-19 and as such, stakeholders worked quickly to develop the directive and corresponding education to assist with the COVID-19 pandemic. The directive was intended to provide quality care for patients and manage the risk and capacity issues of transport compared to the benefit. Many areas of our province have yet to see an influx of call volume due to COVID-19 and as such the auxiliary directive may not be required in all Service areas at this time.

Since the development of the directive, the Ministry has published an updated COVID-19 paramedic screening tool (Version 1.6.). This screening tool is more encompassing and is much less specific to COVID-19 than previous versions. It is meant to keep paramedics safe and not meant as a diagnostic tool for COVID-19. As the most current prehospital COVID-19 screen is very non-specific, use of this directive for all positively screened patients may result in people being left at home who require further diagnostics and care in the hospital setting. In order to mitigate this the Ontario Base Hospital Group (OBHG), in consultation with the OAPC, is reassessing the indications in the directive for leaving patients at home, and then will prepare a request for change to the Assessment of Patients with Possible COVID-19 Medical Directive – Auxiliary that will be submitted to the Ministry of Health. The OBHG educators developed on-line education for the auxiliary directive and this will be updated with any changes to the directive. Training of all active Ontario Paramedics within the Services can occur now, but it may



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be preferable to wait for the updated education. Implementation of the updated directive may occur in specific local areas or regions, in collaboration with local and regional stakeholders.

The Assessment of Patients with Possible COVID-19 Medical Directive – Auxiliary was developed as an Auxiliary Directive, so that each base hospital together with the paramedic services can evaluate the situation in their communities to determine the need to implement the auxiliary medical directive. This may result in the implementation of this auxiliary COVID-19 medical directive in one region and not in others.

If you have any questions, please contact your respective Regional Base Hospital Program.

Respectfully,

Best Regards,

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