

The Death of the Curbside Consult

Todd Swenning, MD
 Director-Institute of Clinical Orthopedics and Neurosciences
 Desert Regional Medical Center
 Palm Springs, CA



We all do it...

- Curbside, or “unstructured” consults are common
 - Risk for incomplete or inaccurate care.
 - Alter the care process in some way...60% of the time.



your eCards



Burden M, Sarcone E, Keniston A, Statland B, Taub JA, Allyn RL, et al. Prospective comparison of curbside versus formal consultations. J Hosp Med. 2013;8(1):31-5.

Why we do it?

- Unique clinical situation.
- On the fringe of comfort zone.
- Demanding/critical patient/family
- Reassurance
- Camaraderie




What constitutes responsibility?



Let's talk legalisms

- Negligence: An act or omission (failure to act) by a medical professional that deviates from the accepted medical standard of care.
- Duty: A legal obligation that entails mandatory conduct or performance.



Example:

- Orthoped on call reduces PW fx dislocation
- Next a.m., asks traumatologist "Does this need to be fixed?"
 - No...schmutz in the joint (infrafoveal). Mobilize, hip precautions, FU with sports partner to remove arthroscopically.



Several weeks later:

- Call from risk mgmt
 - Your patient died of a PE at other facility.



Wait:

- Which patient?
 - The guy with the hip dislocation.
- Oh, you're mistaken. That was Dr. A's pt.
 - He told us that he had transferred care to you.



Bad to worse:

- DC summary dictated posthumously:
 - "FU with Dr. Swenning as I have transferred care to him."



Law suit

- Pt not given VTE prophylaxis, discharged home.
- Orders in the chart to mobilize with PT, DC bucks, ADAT.
 - Unfortunately from my PA



Negligence?

- Act or omission?
- Deviate from standard of care?

- Most likely?



Duty?

- Obligation with mandatory conduct or performance?

- Hmmmmmm.....



ER/Surgeon

- ED attending asks Surgical attending about wound closure
- ED doc follows advice
- Wound: Pus
- Negligence: Maybe
- Duty: Maybe/Yes



Responsibility/Abandonment:

- "Abandoning or neglecting a patient under and in need of immediate professional care, without making reasonable arrangements for the continuation of such care, or abandoning a professional employment by a group practice, hospital clinic or other healthcare facility, without reasonable notice and under circumstances which seriously impair the delivery of professional care to patients or clients."



Food for thought>>>>

- If any question at all with regard to the acuity/complexity, etc...
 - Insist on a formal consult.
 - Protection for all three parties
- Once a duty is owed, we can be held responsible


