

Statewide program to improve emergency care for children

August 14 2009

An initiative is underway to improve emergency medical care for Illinois' youngest patients. Loyola University Health System (LUHS), in collaboration with the Illinois Department of Public Health and other area hospitals, has established a process to support facilities in managing critically ill and injured children across Illinois. This process is outlined in the latest issue of the *Annals of Emergency Medicine*.

"Pediatric emergency patients have unique needs, and many emergency departments lack the resources necessary to care for them," said Dr. Mark Cichon, study co-author and director of emergency medical services, LUHS. "This initiative allows us to prepare these emergency medicine facilities to care for children, so that we can bridge this disparity that exists."

More than 30 years ago, emergency medical services systems were developed to provide rapid out-of-hospital emergency care. These systems focused primarily on the adult heart or trauma patient. Since then, research has indicated that children had higher mortality rates compared with adults in certain similar emergency situations due to the design of the system. Other issues included a high incidence of medication errors, low rates of pain management and missed cases of abuse. These disparities in care led to the development of the national Emergency Medical Services for Children (EMSC) program.

"The Emergency Medical Services for Children program has made it possible to establish pediatric emergency care initiatives at the state and

local level," Dr. Cichon said.

A key initiative of the Illinois EMSC program has been to create a three-tiered recognition process to assist facilities in achieving national pediatric health care objectives and performance measures. This process involves criteria that account for personnel, training, equipment, supplies and medications necessary for quality pediatric care.

"The guidelines suggest that emergency departments be equipped with appropriately trained personnel and resources to provide initial management and stabilization of this vulnerable patient population," Dr. Cichon said.

Illinois emergency departments treated 4.9 million patients in 2005 and more than 20 percent of these patients were younger than 15 years. To date, this approach has been implemented in more than half of Illinois hospitals.

Loyola is designated by the state of Illinois as a Level I Trauma Center for both adult and pediatric patients. The American College of Surgeons (ACS) also has verified the hospital's Level I Trauma Center status. Loyola is the only hospital in Illinois -- and one of a select group nationwide -- to earn this distinction.

Source: Loyola University Health System ([news](#) : [web](#))

Citation: Statewide program to improve emergency care for children (2009, August 14) retrieved 17 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2009-08-statewide-emergency-children.html>

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