



Urgent Medical Matters – Triage

A key challenge for practice support staff is how to recognise urgent medical problems while meeting the competing demands of patients.

RACGP Standards

1.1.1C *Our practice staff can describe the way in which they identify urgent medical matters and their procedures for obtaining urgent medical attention.*

1.1.1D *Our practice has a written policy for dealing with urgent medical matters.*

Assessment methods

- Interviews with practitioners and support staff

During interviews with practice staff, surveyors will ask staff to describe the ways in which they identify urgent medical matters, as well as the procedures the Practice has in place for obtaining urgent medical attention from a clinical staff member.

- Document review of practice systems or policy and procedures manual
- Document review of staff orientation and records

Surveyors may also request to review the written policy for dealing with urgent medical matters

Meeting the standards

Documentation should include practical approaches as to how the Practice anticipates and identifies urgent medical matters. For example, the Practice could reserve 'unbooked' appointment times during normal opening hours for patients with urgent medical needs.

Prior to putting calls on hold, staff could also be trained to ask if the matter is urgent when a patient, carer or family member contacts the Practice.

All non-clinical staff should have triage training and evidence of such should be kept in staff files.

Best practice:

Practice documentation should include practical approaches as to how the Practice anticipates and identifies urgent medical matters.

Tips:

1. The Practice could reserve 'unbooked' appointment times during normal opening hours for patients with urgent medical needs.
2. Prior to putting calls on hold, staff could also be trained to ask if the matter is urgent when a patient, carer or family member contacts the Practice.
3. All non-clinical staff could receive regular 'telephone triage' training with evidence of such training kept in staff files.
4. Staff training might include 'role plays' of various possible scenarios