

# Time critical defined transfer guidelines

February 2011

## Victoria's Intensive Care System

Victoria's statewide intensive care system comprises public health service intensive care units and Adult Retrieval Victoria (ARV) supported by the Department of Health (DH).

Adult Retrieval Victoria, a business unit of Ambulance Victoria, provides advice, referral and transport for critically ill patients. For patients admitted to a hospital, ARV will actively facilitate access to a critical care bed within Victoria when it is required.

### Critical care transfers

A patient requiring urgent critical care may need to be transferred to another hospital if the hospital where they are being cared for does not have an intensive care unit (ICU), the hospital's ICU has no beds available for a new patient or the patient requires specialist care not available at the referral hospital where they are admitted.

Where definitive management of a patient's condition is likely to be achieved by urgent transfer to another hospital, ARV will facilitate access to critical care beds and coordinate transport of critically ill patients.

### Defined transfers

Demand for critical care services is frequently high and there may be periods when demand for critical care beds exceeds the immediate supply, leading to no ICU bed being immediately available for a critically ill patient requiring timely and appropriate investigations, interventions or ICU care. In these instances, to safeguard patient care, ARV is authorised to nominate a hospital to receive the patient. This is called a 'defined transfer' and reflects the time critical need for appropriate care for a critically ill patient.

### Authorisation of defined transfer process

If a defined transfer process is required, authorisation for transfer must be obtained before ARV retrieves the patient to the receiving hospital assessed as the most appropriate destination. Authorisation for a defined transfer will occur through the following process:

- Decision to initiate the defined transfer process will be authorised by the ARV Director (or delegate).
- ARV Director (or delegate) will notify the receiving hospital duty executive member who will communicate and operationalise hospital response and actions.
- ARV Director (or delegate) will inform the Manager, Acute Programs, Performance, Acute Programs & Rural Health, DH, of the defined transfer.

### ARV Assessment criteria for a defined transfer

If no suitable ICU bed can be located for a time-critical patient as indicated by the Victorian Critical Care Access Website, a defined transfer procedure will be initiated by ARV to a public hospital.

The defined transfer process will commence with an assessment by the ARV Director (or delegate) to determine the most appropriate receiving hospital for the patient. This assessment will be based on the standard assessment criteria but also include:

- Nature of the clinical condition
- Degree of clinical urgency

- Nature of the surgical/other intervention required by the patient
- Capability and capacity of the referring health service
- Capability and capacity of the potential receiving health service
- Known or anticipated critical care system demands
- Normal referral and historical clinical relationship patterns
- Geographical proximity
- Needs and consideration of the patient's family
- Distribution and frequency of previous defined transfers to the potential receiving health service

## Defined Transfer Procedure

Once the defined transfer has been authorised, ARV will:

- be advised by the receiving hospital executive of the destination for the patient at the receiving hospital (ICU, ED, Operating Theatre)
- initiate a teleconference between ARV Critical Care Coordinator and the Duty Consultant of the receiving unit and the referrer where appropriate
- coordinate logistics of patient transfer with teleconference participants;
- make a record of the decision to enact a defined transfer and the reasons why the decision was made.

## Review of defined transfers

All defined transfer decisions will be reviewed by ARV. Formal reports detailing the incidence and analysis of such episodes will be provided and reviewed by the Department of Health and the Intensive Care Advisory Committee (ICAC) on a quarterly basis.

## ARV contact details

24 Hour Statewide contact number: 1300 36 86 61

Website: <http://www.ambulance.vic.gov.au/main-home/arv.html>

Email: [info@arv.vic.gov.au](mailto:info@arv.vic.gov.au)

## Further information

For further information please contact: Manager, Acute Programs  
Performance, Acute Programs and Rural Health  
Department of Health

Telephone: 03 9096 8072

Website: [www.health.vic.gov.au/criticalcare/index.htm](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/criticalcare/index.htm)

Email: [criticalcareprogram@health.vic.gov.au](mailto:criticalcareprogram@health.vic.gov.au)