

Patient Safety Learning Advisory

Patient Safety Event: *Delay in access to care*

Why was this a Critical Incident?

A patient presented to the emergency department (ED) with concerns of chest pain and shortness of breath. An EKG and bloodwork were completed in a timely manner but were not reviewed. There was a gap in reviewing the results in a timely manner in order to initiate heart attack care.

What happened in the incident?

A patient presented to the ED with chest and back pain. New symptoms of shortness of breath were reported.

The patient's history included cancer that had spread to other part of their body, described as stage 4, and the patient reported a tumor around their heart.

The patient was assessed as urgent, for chest pain. Nurse-initiated blood work and an EKG were ordered and the results were available in a timely manner. After waiting three hours, the patient left to attend another appointment.

The EKG report was found the next day. It had not been signed or dated by a physician. Once it was found, the EKG was noted to have significant changes and showed a heart attack. This means that in the time of the patient was waiting to be seen by a physician (the day prior), the heart attack was in progress.

The patient was called at home and advised to return to the ED for treatment.

What is the Health Care System learning?

The patient was interpreted as presenting with non-heart attack symptoms due to the diagnosis of stage 4 cancer with tumor around their heart. There is a formal process in place for checking lab work results. An oversight occurred and the test results were not reviewed.

What are the recommendations?

Take to ED council for discussion, the process of reviewing EKG's performed in the region with the suggestion that ED nurses sign/initial the EKG when handed from the diagnostic services technician.

Keywords:

Acute coronary syndrome, heart attack

Glossary:

Acute care coronary syndrome: a serious type of heart attack

EKG: a test to record the electrical signals of the heart which aids in the diagnosis of a heart attack.

Your privacy is important to us, so in this summary we have removed any details which would help identify the subject of this event. It's important that we can learn from safety events and make changes to improve the care we provide.

