1. WHY DO PATIENTS HAVE TO WAIT FOR TREATMENT IN THE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT?

People wait in the Emergency Department for many reasons. Some of these include:

- Waiting while the sickest patients are seen first.
- Waiting for x-ray and laboratory results. (Some tests take longer than others.)
- Waiting for consultations from specialist physicians.
- Waiting for appropriate hospital bed placement.

2. WHAT IS TRIAGE?

You may hear the word triage (pronounced "tree ahj") when you enter the Emergency Department. The triage process determines who needs to be seen first.

A triage nurse will determine the severity of a patient’s condition, based on symptoms. In addition, when a patient first enters the Emergency Department, personal and medical history will be obtained, and vital signs will be checked, including temperature, heart rate, respiratory rate and blood pressure.

3. HOW LONG CAN I EXPECT TO BE IN THE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT?

The very best care takes time. A triage nurse will grade your condition by severity. Patients with life threatening conditions such as stroke or heart attack are seen first.

Once in the treatment area, average stays are about three to 45 hours for released patients and 48 hours or more for patients who are admitted to the hospital. Your total stay may depend on your symptoms, illness and whether you have to be admitted to the hospital. Also, if the emergency physician consults with a specialist or you have special tests and x-rays then your stay may be longer.

4. WHY DO SOME PATIENTS GET SEEN BEFORE OTHERS?

We must care for critical patients with life threatening conditions first. If you have a minor illness or injury, you may have to wait while sicker or more severely injured patients are seen first.

5. DO EXTENDED WAIT TIMES AFFECT TREATMENT OUTCOMES?

Some patients may wait longer than we like, but we do our best to make sure the sickest patients are seen first and that all patients are treated as quickly as possible.

If you have to wait, even though the waiting room doesn't appear busy, please be patient. An empty waiting room does not mean that the Emergency Department is not busy seeing patients. For example, patients who arrive by ambulance enter the Emergency Department through a different entrance. Also, many important "behind the scenes" activities take place in the Emergency Department that patients don't always see, such as process lab and other test results.

6. HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO GET LABORATORY AND X-RAY RESULTS?

To accurately diagnose your condition, we need time to review any lab tests and x-rays. Most laboratory and x-ray results take approximately two hours. However, some tests take longer to process than others.

7. WHO WILL BE CARING FOR ME?

As a patient in the Emergency Department, you will be cared for by a team of highly skilled professionals.

These may include:

- A Doctor has overall responsibility for your care. Sometimes Physician Assistant may care for you. They work closely with the Doctor to provide appropriate, timely medical care.
- A Registered Nurse (RN) will assess and monitor your physical condition. He or she will give your medication, maintain your IV and keep you and your family informed of any tests and procedures. Your nurse will also provide you with important discharge information before you go home. Each nurse is responsible for several patients and works closely with your doctor or health care professional to provide the best care possible for you.
- A Patient Care Associate (PCA) may work with your nurse or doctor. The PCA will check your vital signs, collect lab specimens, transport you to special testing and assist you as needed to make your stay as comfortable as possible.
- A Social Worker may also see you during your stay. Social Workers sometimes play a vital role in caring for Emergency Department patients. They may assist in referring you to outside agencies for follow up medical care.

8. CAN MY FAMILY VISIT ME IN THE TREATMENT AREA?

Two family members are allowed to wait with you in your treatment room. If the Emergency Department becomes full or if a caregiver feels you need privacy, your family members may be asked to return to the waiting area. In consideration for our critically ill patients, no child 12 or under may visit a patient without special permission from the charge nurse. All visitors must be wearing a visitor tag before being allowed in the treatment rooms. We will provide two per family.
9. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I AM DISCHARGED?

You will be given instructions on how to care for yourself and given a number to call if you have continued problems. You may be instructed to follow up with your primary care physician.

10. HOW CAN I SHARE MY THOUGHTS ABOUT MY EXPERIENCE?

Our goal is to provide each patient with emergency medical care of the highest quality. If you are dissatisfied with the care you receive at any time during your stay, please tell your nurse or doctor before you leave so that we can address any concerns that you may have.

If you have any additional questions or comments regarding your Emergency Department visit, please feel free to contact the Emergency Department Nurse Manager at (716) 363-7297.