The Reception Role in General Practice

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We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the Traditional Owners of the lands. We wish to pay our respects to their Elders – past, present and emerging – and acknowledge the important role Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to play within our community.

This webinar has been developed by Eastern Melbourne PHN on behalf of the Victorian and Tasmanian PHN Alliance, which is a collective platform for the seven PHNs in Victoria and Tasmania.
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Roles and responsibilities

- **Customer service and communication**

- **Accreditation**

  - Triage

  - Infection prevention and control

  - Vaccine and cold chain management

  - Privacy and confidentiality of health information

  - Communication with clinical staff

  - Patient health records

  - Recalls and reminders

  - Occupational health and safety

- **Team work**

Customer service

- The patient experience includes:
  - ➢ practice visit
  - ➢ phone contact
  - ➢ website or online booking system

- Greet patients with a smile

- Set a favourable tone – friendly, attentive, helpful

- Know your products, services and billing system

- Consider your internet customers

- Think about your own experience at a medical centre

Customer service

- Acknowledge the patient within the first 30 seconds

- If the phone rings, ask the patient if you can answer it and put the caller on hold

- Use eye contact & conversation

- Maintain sensitivity

- Focus on one person at a time

- Avoid personal conversations

- Don't discuss patients with staff in reception

- Be aware of patients in waiting room

- Know local products and services available

- Know the practice location including nearest intersection

Customer service

Feedback is part of quality improvement

- ➤ patient surveys

- ➤ suggestion box

- ➤ verbal

- ➤ website

Customer service

- **Complaints**

  - listen to patients
  - know your policies and procedures
  - pay attention to waiting patients
  - let patients know waiting times
  - acknowledge a patient's complaint & try to find a solution

- **Violent and aggressive behaviour should not be tolerated**

Customer service

The benefits of high quality customer service are:

- improved customer satisfaction

- creation of stronger customer loyalty and

- increased staff job satisfaction

Communication

Barriers to effective communication include:

- age

- cultural background

- socio-economic status

- past negative experiences with healthcare providers

- illness

- disability

- stress or worry

Communication

Telephone communication

- The caller expects 3 things:
    - respect
    - help
    - no waste of time

- Learn the standard greeting for your practice

- Have pen and paper nearby

- Don't put caller on hold without their permission

- Be aware of practice policy for incoming calls & triage

- Use closed questions

- Know your policy for terminating calls and documenting incidents

Telephone communication

Some important tips for telephone communication:

- don't use slang

- don't leave the patient uninformed

- remember confidentiality and be aware of who is listening in the waiting area

- don't sound tired or bored

- don't rush a caller - allow time for the patient to comprehend what you have said

- do give your full attention to each patient

- check the patient's details so you know who you are speaking to

Accreditation

An assessment against the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) 5th edition Standards.

Orientation and training appropriate to your role:

➢ Triage

➢ Infection prevention & control

➢ Vaccine and cold chain management

➢ Privacy and confidentiality

➢ Communication with clinical staff

➢ Patient health records

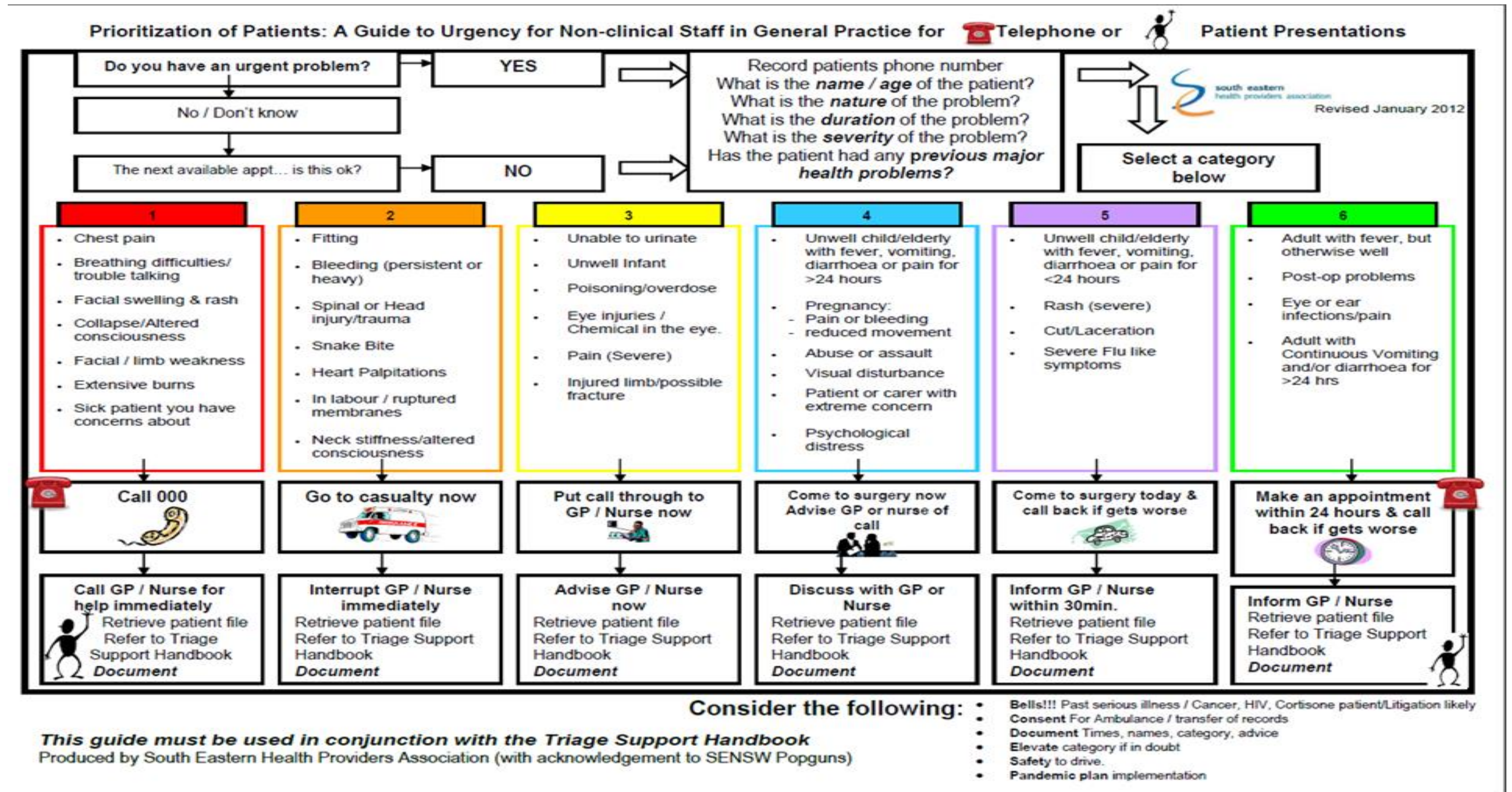➢ Recalls and reminders

➢ Occupational health and safety

Triage

Receptionists triage calls to determine urgency and ensure a time critical appointment

- Assists in allocating appointments safely and alerts clinical staff to people who may have a serious medical condition

- The practice should have a triage protocol

- Listen to the patient and don't rush them

Triage

Prioritization of Patients: A Guide to Urgency for Non-clinical Staff in General Practice for Telephone or Patient Presentations

Do you have an urgent problem? → YES

No / Don't know

The next available appt... is this ok? → NO

Record patients phone number
What is the *name / age* of the patient?
What is the *nature* of the problem?
What is the *duration* of the problem?
What is the *severity* of the problem?
Has the patient had any *previous major health problems?*

south eastern health providers association

Revised January 2012

Select a category below

1	2	3	4	5	6
- Chest pain - Breathing difficulties/ trouble talking - Facial swelling & rash - Collapse/Altered consciousness - Facial / limb weakness - Extensive burns - Sick patient you have concerns about	- Fitting - Bleeding (persistent or heavy) - Spinal or Head injury/trauma - Snake Bite - Heart Palpitations - In labour / ruptured membranes - Neck stiffness/altered consciousness	- Unable to urinate - Unwell Infant - Poisoning/overdose - Eye injuries / Chemical in the eye. - Pain (Severe) - Injured limb/possible fracture	- Unwell child/elderly with fever, vomiting, diarrhoea or pain for >24 hours - Pregnancy: - Pain or bleeding - reduced movement - Abuse or assault - Visual disturbance - Patient or carer with extreme concern - Psychological distress	- Unwell child/elderly with fever, vomiting, diarrhoea or pain for <24 hours - Rash (severe) - Cut/Laceration - Severe Flu like symptoms	- Adult with fever, but otherwise well - Post-op problems - Eye or ear infections/pain - Adult with Continuous Vomiting and/or diarrhoea for >24 hrs
Call 000	Go to casualty now	Put call through to GP / Nurse now	Come to surgery now Advise GP or nurse of call	Come to surgery today & call back if gets worse	Make an appointment within 24 hours & call back if gets worse
Call GP / Nurse for help immediately Retrieve patient file Refer to Triage Support Handbook *Document*	Interrupt GP / Nurse immediately Retrieve patient file Refer to Triage Support Handbook *Document*	Advise GP / Nurse now Retrieve patient file Refer to Triage Support Handbook *Document*	Discuss with GP or Nurse Retrieve patient file Refer to Triage Support Handbook *Document*	Inform GP / Nurse within 30min. Retrieve patient file Refer to Triage Support Handbook *Document*	Inform GP / Nurse Retrieve patient file Refer to Triage Support Handbook *Document*

Consider the following:
- Bells!!! Past serious illness / Cancer, HIV, Cortisone patient/Litigation likely
- Consent For Ambulance / transfer of records
- Document Times, names, category, advice
- Elevate category if in doubt
- Safety to drive.
- Pandemic plan implementation

This guide must be used in conjunction with the Triage Support Handbook
Produced by South Eastern Health Providers Association (with acknowledgement to SENSW Popguns)

Infection prevention and control

- Cover any cuts and ensure you feel well

- Hand hygiene

- Alcohol hand rub, tissues and a bin for disposal

- Personal protective equipment

- Options for isolating infectious patients

Infection prevention and control

- **Spills kit**
  - Used to safely clean up potentially infectious spill
  - Know where the kit is stored
  - Ensure you have been trained
  - Use the personal protective equipment

- **Cleaning**
  - Practices must be visibly clean
  - Reception staff may have duties such as wiping surfaces
  - Know the practice cleaning schedule

- **Immunisations**
  - Protects against infectious agents
  - Full immunisation is recommended

Vaccine & cold chain management

- What is 'cold chain'?
    - maintaining vaccines between 2 and 8 °C

- Receptionist duties may include:
    - twice daily temperature recording and reset of thermometer
    - receipt of vaccines from couriers
    - power failure or cold chain breach procedures

Vaccine & cold chain management

- Cold chain breaches may occur:
  - during delivery of vaccines
  - power failure
  - vaccine fridge door left open

- Breaches must be investigated and acted upon immediately

- Read your vaccine and cold chain management policy

- When a cold chain breach occurs:
  - maintain vaccines between 2 and 8 °C
  - mark vaccines as "do not use"
  - do not dispose of vaccines until advised

- Patients may bring vaccines into the practice

Privacy & confidentiality

- Protect patient privacy and confidentiality

- Ensure all medical information is stored in a secure manner

- Be aware of:

  ➢ practice policies and procedures

  ➢ privacy legislation
    - Privacy Act
    - Australian Privacy Principles

Privacy & confidentiality

- Consider patient privacy when having discussions with patients

- Messages, computer screens, correspondence and pathology should not be visible

- Don't discuss patients outside the practice

- Never disclose sensitive information to another person without the patient's consent

- Know the practice policy on leaving a message for a patient

- Following the practice procedure for requests to view or transfer files

Communication with clinical staff

- Have a clear understanding of the communication systems in the practice

    ➢ do you have a paper based or computer based message system?
    ➢ what information are you required to collect?

- Be aware of which clinical staff are working and who is on leave

    ➢ ensure that someone is attending to clinical issues when staff are absent

- Know the protocol for dealing with phone calls in your practice

Patient health records

- Receptionists have an important role in maintaining an accurate patient database

- Use 3 approved identifiers to confirm patient identity
  eg. patient's full name, date of birth and address

- Ask the patient to state these details

- An accurate patient database assists with confidentiality

- Alerts or notes on patient profiles must be acted on and then deleted

Recalls and Reminders

- **Recall**
  - patient requires further advice or treatment in relation to a **clinically significant issue**
  - often due to test results
  - receptionists may be asked to contact the patient for a recall appointment

- **Know the practice policy and processes as recalls involve considerable risk**

- **Reminder**
  - contact with patient to remind them to attend for routine care
  - eg. immunisation, health assessment, routine cervical screening test

Occupational Health & Safety

- Everyone is responsible

- Practices must provide a safe environment for staff and patients

- Faulty equipment or hazards must be identified and reported to responsible person

- Consider safety issues
  - ➢ clean waiting room
  - ➢ safe chairs
  - ➢ no obstructions or spills

- Know your practice policy on managing difficult situations

Occupational Health & Safety

- Staff should report any incidents relating to a staff member, patient or visitor
    - accident
    - injury
    - potential injury

- Discuss in practice meetings

- Incident review should consider:
    - cause
    - management
    - procedures
    - training
    - equipment

Teamwork

- Working collaboratively with a group of people to achieve a common goal

- Good teamwork offers:

    - increased efficiency

    - a learning experience

    - enhanced communication

    - a shared workload

Teamwork

Good teamwork offers everyone a supportive network

- Be supportive and reliable
- In challenging times, support is crucial
- Ask for help if unsure
- Consider training or reading to enhance skills
- Learn from teammates and give feedback

Team members are customers too

- Be attentive, friendly and helpful

Summary

Customer service and communication

Accreditation

- ➢ Triage

- ➢ Infection prevention and control

- ➢ Vaccine and cold chain management

- ➢ Privacy and confidentiality of health information

- ➢ Communication with clinical staff

- ➢ Patient health records

- ➢ Recalls and reminders

- ➢ Occupational health and safety

Team work

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