



The College of Emergency Medicine

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CLINICAL EFFECTIVENESS COMMITTEE

Providing pre-transfusion blood samples for the police: Position Statement

Fellows and members of the College are occasionally asked to take pre-transfusion blood samples from patients to assist the police in investigating crimes. The police test these blood samples for toxicology. Emergency physicians should not normally provide pre-transfusion blood samples for the police.

Emergency physicians who undertake this role should be appropriately trained in taking blood forensically. They should ensure that they can quality assure the chain of evidence, providing an audit trail that will stand up to legal scrutiny in court.

Where emergency physicians are unable to provide these assurances, there is a risk that a police investigation will be compromised by inadequately taken and recorded evidence. This task should be, therefore, be delegated to the police to find an appropriately trained forensic medical examiner.

Where a patient requires a blood transfusion, the emergency physician should ensure that he makes the welfare of the patient his or her first concern. It is inappropriate to delay life-saving treatment while waiting for blood samples to be drawn.

Prepared for the Clinical Effectiveness Committee by Adrian Boyle and Meng Aw-Yong

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