

143.00

REFERRALS TO HOSPITAL PEDIATRIC EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT: HOW DO COMMUNITY PHYSICIANS CATEGORIZE THE NEED TO REFER?

J. Urkin^{1,2}, I. Segal², N. Barak², J. Press^{1,2}

¹*Department of Pediatrics, Soroka Medical Center* ²*Faculty of Health Sciences, Ben-Gurion University of The Negev, Beer-Sheva, Israel*
jacobur@clalit.org.il

Background: The hospital pediatric emergency department (PED) provides care to children with immediate problems that cannot be addressed in the community. As PED services are expensive, compared to community services, the referring physician should justify these referrals. Children present at PED with standard referral letter that is expected to explain the urgency of the referral.

Study objective: To describe how community physicians categorize the urgency of their referrals to PED.

Design: A consensus group of senior community pediatricians developed a list of categories for urgency of referral. The referring physicians completed a "Referral urgency checklist form" on a sample of referrals. In parallel, two senior pediatricians, using the referral letters of the sample, categorized the urgency of the patients' referrals.

Results: One hundred and forty cases were analyzed. Thirty seven percent of the referring physicians were board certified pediatricians, 52% general physicians and 11% family physicians.

The category most used to justify urgency of referral was "need to conduct same day consultation, or laboratory test, or imaging without a community alternative". Other frequent notated categories were "suspected life, or tissue, threatening infection", "need for inpatient observation" and "suspected acute surgical emergency". Approximately 9% were categorized as "compliance with parental demand for referral".

Conclusion: The current standard referral letter to the pediatric emergency department fails to reflect the urgency of the referral. A checklist, added to the standard referral letter, can clarify the community physician's needs and augment communication between the referring physician and the emergency department staff.

