A busy year for EMSI and its staff

About the cover – Special thanks to McCandless-Franklin Park Ambulance Authority, their staff, and Alexis Takach, Morgan and Anna Kaufman for their help to make the cover photo a success.
Opportunity is Knocking!

“It is not often that a man can make opportunities for himself, but he can put himself in such shape that, when or if the opportunities come, he is ready.” - Theodore Roosevelt

When Act 45 of 1985 (the original EMS Act) was passed, providers statewide celebrated the fact that the Legislature finally recognized EMS as a respectable occupation. While this law launched the “modern” era of EMS in Pennsylvania, providers found themselves operating in a box – quite literally. If a provider was not functioning on behalf of a licensed ambulance service and operating out of the back of an ambulance on an EMERGENCY call, the provider was actually functioning outside of the law! Over the years, the stringent interpretation of the original EMS Act softened and the evolution of many emergency and public health activities carried out by EMS providers became “sanctioned” – or, at least, not subjected to discipline.

With the passage of Act 37 of 2009 (the new EMS System Act), along with the implementing regulations, doors are finally opening to allow EMS to become an integral part of the healthcare system in Pennsylvania. The drafters of the EMS System Act and the new regulations worked diligently to create flexible documents that recognize the importance of EMS providers in all phases of public health, disaster management and mitigation, mass gathering events, various response and rescue activities, and other situations where daily life finds people who are ill or have been injured.

In a word, the EMS System Act offers OPPORTUNITY! For the first time in nearly three decades, we have new levels at which providers can be certified, creating a pathway of educational opportunities. EMS agencies now can participate cooperatively to share resources to more efficiently and effectively provide emergency response services to meet the needs of their communities.

Perhaps most importantly, EMS is now legislatively recognized as an integral part of public health, allowing the opportunity to provide new and innovative services such as Mobile Integrated Health Care – perhaps better known as “Community Paramedicine.”

Inherent in the new law is the underlying theme that EMS is no longer just a job; it is now a profession. For years, EMS providers have longed to be treated as professionals, and I believe we finally have that opportunity as well. However, with this opportunity comes responsibility, including the responsibility to be in service 24/7/365; the responsibility to have functioning Safety and Quality Assurance committees that provide meaningful input into day-to-day operations; the responsibility to obtain (and maintain) the necessary continuing education requirements to function in the field; and the responsibility, both as a provider and as EMS agencies, to recognize that failure to comply with the obligations of our profession may result in adverse consequences, possibly even including monetary penalties!

The philosophy of our EMS administration today is to get out of the way of those who are doing a good job and focus on expanding and enhancing the EMS system as a whole. Ours should be a system that is inclusive, not exclusive, and one that encourages innovation and advancement, not one that penalizes it. Perhaps the stars have finally aligned just enough for EMS to finally come into its own!

Opportunity is knocking. Are we ready to answer? I believe that we are.
LICENSURE

"By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail." - Abraham Lincoln

Old Abe could have been speaking directly to Operational Readiness when he made this statement. Licensure is a critical module on the list of Council responsibilities, making certain that every vehicle, whether ground or air, is properly prepared to respond, treat and transport patients. EMSI’s Operation Division continuously reinforces the culture of safety and readiness for EMS personnel and patients with inspections of vehicles by ensuring that all fleets comply with the regulations set forth by the PA DOH Bureau of EMS.

Number of licensure inspections conducted for the renewal of license:
- 8 BLS Services - 11 Vehicles
- 47 ALS Services - 294 Vehicles

Number of EMS Agencies adding/replacing vehicles:
- 47 Agencies - 64 Vehicles
- VRSR Swift water Certifications - 3

EMSI continues to work side by side with the PA Fire Academy and the PA Fish and Boat Commission to make certain that Swift Water Rescue Services comply with requirements to obtain or renew accreditation.

EMSI COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES

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Eric Brewer
Pete Frejkowski
Lance Winterhalter
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Kay Jo Fischer

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WHO ARE WE?

As an additional responsibility mandated by Bureau of EMS, all Regional EMS Councils are to assist federal, state and local agencies in the event of a potential or actual disaster, mass casualty situation or other substantial threats to public health with a strategy that combines enhanced planning, new equipment purchases, innovative training and realistic exercises to strengthen its capabilities in all five mission areas – prevention, protection, mitigation response and recovery. Training and exercises play a critical role in this strategy. As part of its fulfillment of these tasks, the Institute actively participates with the Region 13 Task Force, as well as with the Emergency Management officials throughout the Region.

During the past year, EMSI Staff participated in 60 Task Force and Committee meetings, 11 Table Top Exercises and eight Full Scale Field Exercises. EMSI participated in Region 13 EMS Committee meetings, MMRS Health & Medical subcommittee and Steering Committee meetings, full MMRS meetings and Region 13 open meetings, Allegheny County Local Emergency Planning Committee meetings, Allegheny County Citizen Corps Council meeting and quarterly meetings of the statewide Advisory Committee for Preparedness.

EMSI is well positioned to fulfill its mandate and has participated in the following events during the last 15 months:

• Bettis Tabletop and Full Scale Exercise
• CONSOL Mining Full Scale Drill
• Response to Hurricane Sandy
• EMS Command School
• Active Shooter Exercises in Butler, Fayette and Allegheny Counties
• Operation Bough Breaks Tabletop and Full Scale Drill
• Environmental Support at Ellwood City Hospital
Management Systems

“Safety isn’t expensive – it’s priceless.” With Safety always present in our minds, EMSI distributed SAFETY SHOWS seatbelt covers and Pedi-Mate Pediatric Restraint Systems to services in the Region.

31 Medical Command Facilities are accredited; 10 were renewed.

269 Medical Command Physicians certifications were renewed; an additional 67 new medical command physician certification were issued.

Over 50% of the agency Medical Directors in the Region have completed the EMS agency medical director’s course or its equivalent.

1,625 Medical Command Authorization applications were processed.

Nearly 80% of the hospitals in the Region participated in the National Readiness Assessment project.

The Regional racemic epinephrine study was conducted and additional studies in remote ischemic conditioning, measurement of lactate levels and comparing use of crystalloid IV fluid vs. blood plasma were approved to be conducted in the Region.

EMSI received approval for two local industries to stock cyano-kits for EMS agencies to utilize if necessary.

The Critical Care Paramedic sub-committee, chaired by Dr. Frank Guyette, received approval to progress to Phase III of the project and will begin developing a set of critical care transport protocols.

EMSI Safety Meeting - October 2013

EDUCATION

Responsibility is something that you are expected to do, that which is morally and ethically right. When many of us started in EMS, our responsibility was simply to show up when called. That is what the expectation was of our patients and our community. But in EMS, as in life, as we mature our responsibilities change and culpability has become much greater. As an EMS practitioner, our responsibilities now include being prepared, prompt, professional, knowledgeable, articulate, and safe. The goal is to protect ourselves and protect the public.

The EMSI Education Team is one of the resources and links for that protection. By ensuring that continuing education is timely, correct and informative, we better prepare EMS providers to be knowledgeable and professional. By ensuring certification programs and examinations are fair, equitable and efficient, we train new providers to be prepared and safe. The EMSI Education Team continues to be a leader in process changes within the state, helping to develop a consistent and effective EMS education system state wide, as well as region wide.

Our ultimate responsibility is to help protect the public as well. The best method we have to achieve this goal is by using the most current standards, processes, and validated exams to produce, educate, inform and oversee current and future EMS professionals.

EMSI Update was held March 21-23, 2013. 836 registered participants attended. 60% of those attending function at the BLS level. The conference attracted participants from 11 states. Within Pennsylvania, 41 counties were represented.

Dr. Richard Wadas, EMSI Associate Regional Medical Director (R), pictured with Dr. Paul Paris at a recent EMSI Medical Direction meeting, was the recipient of Pittsburgh Magazine’s “City’s best EM Doctor in Pittsburgh” and PA ACEP’s Emergency Physician of the Year. In addition, The Journal of Emergency Medicine published research, co-authored by Dr. Wadas, on the cases of regional CO monitor use.

EMSI Safety Meeting- October 2013

EMSI Update March 21-23, 2013

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EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS

Annual Skills Review held at EMSI office – During the year, 2,374 continuing education courses were conducted and involved 36,158 students.

Con-ed Ed Classes By County

- 63 BLS certification courses were held - this is nearly 50% of all BLS certification courses registered in the state. Currently, 37 certification courses are underway, including 6 Paramedic programs.
- Approximately 1300 students were tested for the BLS Psychomotor exam between 11/12 and 10/13. Another 173 students were tested at the ALS level.
- 251 active EMS Instructors in the region assisted with programs at 13 Training Institutes, 4 were reaccredited. There are 153 Continuing Education Sponsors, 44 of which were re-accredited.
- EMSI hosted an Instructor Professional Development Program, Evaluator and PHRN Prepare Workshops, a moulage course and two ConED Sponsor Training sessions.
- EMSI Staff developed a Provider Resource Brochure which outlines the continuing education program. The brochure is sent to all newly certified providers.

MEDICAL COMMAND HIGHLIGHTS

620,000+ Annual Regional Ambulance Responses

- 25,000 Monthly calls handled by the 12 busiest ambulance services account for 50% of the total regional volume.
- 70 Ambulance services (50% of total licensed) handled 94% of the regional call volume.
- 22 Ambulance services responded to an average of fewer than one call per day.
- 14 accredited Primary Stroke Centers recognized in the Region.
- 32,000+ people trained in Hands Only CPR in the region (10% of the state total).

Breakdown of Types of Transport

- 42% of all calls happen during daylight hours.
- 70.4% of patients are transported to hospitals; others are transported to non-acute healthcare facilities.