Sample

TITLE: Chain of Command (COC): Communication of Patient Care Concerns

PURPOSE: The “Chain of Command: Communication of Patient Care Concerns” policy provides all employees with a formal communication process for the prompt handling and resolution of patient care concerns. The policy establishes a formal communication process to address patient care concerns regarding a treatment plan, or the lack thereof, which could adversely affect the health of the patient. Effective communication to address patient care concerns, between staff, residents, and attending physicians, should be timely, thorough, and accurate.

POLICY: The hospital staff and the medical staff are committed to working together to deliver the highest quality of patient care in accordance with the established policies, procedures, and standards of care. Any licensed healthcare provider, who identifies a patient care concern should take immediate action to address it. The licensed healthcare provider should present the concern in a timely manner to successively higher levels of command, as needed, until a satisfactory resolution is achieved. Examples of when the COC may be necessary include, but are not limited to, the following:

a. Physician orders remain unclear after the physician was asked for clarification
b. A patient is declining and the physician has not responded in a timely manner
c. A nurse’s assessment differs significantly from the attending physician’s assessment
d. A deviation exists between established hospital policy and procedure
e. The nurse perceives an immediate risk to the patient and that the physician’s plan of care does not address it

PROCEDURE:
1. If a licensed healthcare provider identifies a potential or actual patient care concern, he/she should attempt to resolve the concern by talking directly with the attending physician involved in order to clarify orders as well as advise of significant changes in the patient’s condition.
2. If the patient care concern remains unresolved, or the attending physician has not responded in a timely manner, the immediate supervisor or house supervisor (after
hours) should be notified. The licensed healthcare provider has the responsibility to continue notification following the hospital’s chain of command as needed, until the issue is resolved in a timely manner. Refer to the hospital’s organizational chart to determine the appropriate chain of command.

3. In the medical record, document notifications and attempts to notify along with pertinent information as appropriate.

4. If the incident requires the Chain of Command process, complete an incident report regarding the incident and notification attempts. Follow the “Incident Reporting” policy.

ACCOUNTABILITY:
1. All hospital and medical staff should take whatever action is necessary and appropriate to ensure that patients receive quality care. Communication regarding patient care concerns should be timely, complete, and accurate and follow the Chain of Command, if necessary, to achieve resolution.

2. Risk management may be involved in the resolution of patient care concerns and has the following responsibilities:
   a. Follow up on incident reports as outlined in the “Incident Reporting” policy.
   b. Analyze incidents for trends and identify interventions to prevent future occurrences of similar types of patient care concerns. If necessary, employee, resident, or physician peer review or the disciplinary corrective action process will be used. Changes in policy/procedures will be approved and implemented as needed.
   c. Ensure staff receive education on this policy.
   d. Review the effectiveness of this policy and make changes as needed.

REFERENCES:

The sample policy is provided as a source of information and is to be modified to fit the needs of your medical practice. It is not intended as legal advice. If legal advice is required, please contact an attorney.