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Circular Letter: DHCQ – 15-3-632

TO: Acute Care Hospitals:
Chief Executive Officers, Emergency Preparedness Personnel

FROM: Deborah Allwes, BS, BSN, MPH
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SUBJECT: Mass Casualty Patient Tracking Protocol for 119th Boston Marathon

DATE: March 27, 2015

This Circular Letter is intended to establish the Patient Tracking Protocol (Protocol) to be followed by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH), the American Red Cross of Massachusetts (Red Cross), and receiving hospitals to track patients in the event there is a mass casualty incident (MCI) associated with the 119th Boston Marathon on April 20, 2015. This Protocol will be activated only in the event of an MCI as described in this document. This protocol does not replace the runner tracking system coordinated by the Boston Athletic Association and the Boston Public Health Commission.

Background

If there is an MCI associated with the 119th Boston Marathon that results in the transport of injured individuals to multiple hospitals within or outside the Commonwealth, there will be a need for timely and accurate information about their whereabouts in order to facilitate family reunification efforts. DPH has the authority to collect and maintain a central listing of personal health information (PHI) about individuals injured in such an MCI. Hospitals may, in compliance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), release PHI to DPH for the purposes of supporting family reunification and notification. DPH and Red Cross have mutual, overlapping and complementary interests, and have a memorandum of agreement (MOA) to work together for the 119th Boston Marathon to undertake appropriate family reunification and notification efforts, if needed.

MCI Patient Tracking Procedures for the 119th Boston Marathon

On April 20, 2015, in the event there is an MCI associated with the Boston Marathon that results in the transport of injured individuals to multiple hospitals within or outside the Commonwealth, the Commissioner of Public Health (Commissioner) or her designee may authorize activation of the MCI Patient Tracking Protocol under the oversight of DPH. Once the Commissioner has activated the Protocol, a severe level Health and Homeland Alert Network (HHAN) alert will be sent immediately to notify all hospital emergency preparedness coordinators and the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA).

DPH, in collaboration with receiving hospitals, and the Red Cross will coordinate collection of pre-identified patient identification information in order to create a single centralized listing of injured individuals and support necessary family reunification and notification efforts.

For Hospitals outside the City of Boston:

Pre-designated personnel at each receiving hospital outside the City of Boston will submit patient information via secure fax for all disaster-affected transported patients to the Patient Tracking Unit at the DPH Department Operations Center (DOC). The Patient Tracking Unit will maintain and update, as necessary, the central list of all disaster-affected patients received by hospitals.

For Hospitals within the City of Boston:

Boston hospitals that receive patients associated with the incident should continue to enter patient information in EMTrack. The Boston Medical Intelligence Center will submit patient information via secure fax for all disaster-affected transported patients to the Patient Tracking Unit at the DPH DOC. The Patient Tracking Unit will maintain and update, as necessary, the central list of all disaster-affected patients received by hospitals.

The Red Cross will place its trained personnel at the DPH DOC. Red Cross personnel will enter the information provided by the Patient Tracking Unit into the secure Red Cross Patient Connection web form. The patient information to be provided by hospitals to DPH is limited to the following:

- First and Last Name
- Patient Identification Number
- Date of Birth
- Gender
- Nationality (if known)
- Patient location and hospital contact information

The Red Cross will stand up a call center at the Red Cross Cambridge Headquarters. The Red Cross has established a dedicated toll-free Patient Connection telephone line for calls from the public seeking information about individuals who may have been injured and transported to a hospital. Patient Connection and family reunification may also occur at a physical reception center or family assistance center, if one is established.

The Red Cross will collect the following information from people seeking to locate an individual who may have been transported to a hospital:

Information collected from seeker about individual sought	Information collected about the seeker
First and Last Name	First and Last name
Date of Birth or age	Relationship
Gender	Primary phone number
Primary language	Alternate phone number
Nickname	When did you last have contact?
Nationality or ethnicity	Have you checked with others?
Hair color	Why do you believe the individual was affected by the incident?
Eye Color	Description (e.g., height, weight, identifying marks, etc)

Trained Red Cross personnel will enter into Patient Connection details about the sought person and the seeker. Patient Connection will use a simple match-finding feature, and a designated Red Cross person/team will check seeker/sought comparisons to find and verify all potential matches.

Return calls will be placed by trained Red Cross personnel once a confirmed match has been made, and will provide only information about the injured individual’s location and the appropriate hospital point of contact for the seeker. The Red Cross will not release any information about patient condition, and will not share information with any other organization, entity, or individual except as specified by DPH, provided, however, that the Red Cross may share information about a foreign national who has been transported to a hospital with the appropriate consulate representative.

If the Red Cross is unable to make a confirmed match for an individual transported to a hospital, the Red Cross will notify DPH, and provide all information regarding that transported individual. The Red Cross shall also provide all information received from seekers that cannot be matched to any individual transported to a hospital following an MCI associated with the 119th Boston Marathon.

The Red Cross will forward to DPH all requests for information, outside of family reunification or notification information, regarding foreign nationals.

Completion of Family reunification and Notification

Family reunification and notification efforts will be considered complete when the earlier of these actions occurs: (a) the Commissioner or her designee terminates activation of the Patient Tracking Protocol, or (b) the Red Cross confirms to DPH that Red Cross personnel have completed or attempted to complete family reunification or has notified the appropriate consulate about every positively-identified individual on the DPH centralized list of individuals injured and transported to a hospital as a result of an MCI associated with the 119th Boston Marathon.

Once the family reunification and notification efforts are considered complete, a severe level HHAN alert of such completion will be sent to notify all hospital emergency preparedness coordinators and MEMA.

For additional information please contact:
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