



## ***Agitation is a medical emergency that requires immediate treatment.***

Early verbal de-escalation and medical management of symptoms may avoid need for patient restraint and involuntary medication administration.

### **GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR AGITATED PATIENTS**

Ensure a safe environment for the patient and staff—remove potential weapons from area.

- \* Reduce noise, lights & crowding as much as possible.
- \* Offer oral medications early—ask patients what has worked in past and ensure they are not missing home doses of medication while in the ED.
- \* Attend to physical comfort (food, drink, blanket).
- \* Express sympathy for what the patient is going through.
- \* Be respectful. Treat the patient as you would want a family member treated in the ED.
- \* Involve patient in treatment decisions when possible.

### **TEN DOMAINS OF VERBAL DE-ESCALATION**

- 1** Respect personal space
- 2** Do not be provocative
- 3** Establish verbal contact
- 4** Be concise
- 5** Identify wants and feelings
- 6** Listen closely to what the patient is saying
- 7** Agree or agree to disagree
- 8** Lay down the law and set clear limits
- 9** Offer choices and optimism
- 10** Debrief the patient and staff

### **DE-ESCALATION TECHNIQUES USEFUL IN THE ED:**

Acknowledge them politely and respectfully. “Hi, Mr. Smith, I’m Dr. Jones. I’m sorry you have to be here today. I’m going to take report from the officers and then I’ll get the full story from you.”

Offer patients things to make them more comfortable: “Would you like something to eat or drink? Some Tylenol? A blanket?”

Offer medical therapy for psychiatric symptoms: “I’d like to help you with the scary thoughts you’re having and give you something to make you less anxious. May I give you something to help calm you down?”

Involve them in decisions about their treatment: “What has worked for you in the past?” Have you tried Zyprexa or Risperdal or other psychiatric medications?”

Address their non-psychiatric needs: “Are you having any physical health problems today that we can help you with? Do you need... (a breathing treatment? something for pain? etc.)”

Give the patient choices: “Do you want the lights on or off?” “Would you like your medication in pill form, or would it be better to give you a shot?”

Express sympathy for what they’re going through: “I’m so sorry this has been so tough for you.”

Appeal to their better nature: “There are children and sick people all around us—do you think you could lower your voice a little? That would be really helpful.” “You’re scaring my staff—could you please stay in your room? I know you don’t want to scare anyone.”

Explain consequences: “I need for you to calm down and stop yelling. I want to help you, but if you can’t stop spitting (hitting/yelling/etc.), we’re going to have to sedate you.”

Smile. Use a soothing voice. Imagine the patient is your child/parent/sibling.