Flight Nursing 101

What you need to know if you want to be a Flight Nurse

Sharon Purdom, RN, BSN, CEN, CFRN
• The history of patient transport can be traced back to before the invention of the wheel when patients were carried or dragged to care.

• Ambulance system were first established in the 1400’s using horse pulled stretchers and wagons specifically designed for patient transport.

• During WW1 the U.S. used air ambulance using a JN-4 aircraft then Igor Sirkorsky produced several helicopters for military use.
The first patient helicopter rescue April 1944 in the military.

20,000 transported in Korean War.

200,000 transported Vietnam war

Decrease in morbidity and mortality
• The first Flight Nurse training program was through the military.

• Six weeks training, and included flight physiology.

• In 1972 St. Anthony’s hospital in Denver Colorado and Loma Hospital in California started the first based helicopter program.
Flight Crew personalities

- Highly dedicated/dynamic
- Task orientated
- Decision makers
- Flexible but firm
- Confident
- Ambitious
- A little bit of a MacGyver
- Adrenaline junkies
- Motivated
- Very high tolerance for stress
Medical Crew Configuration

- 80% Programs Nurse – Paramedic
- Nurse – Respiratory Therapy
- Nurse – Physician
- Nurse - Nurse
Crew configuration and training

• Pilots
  – Minimum of 2000+ hours rotor wing flying
  – Most have >3500 hours
  – Commercial and instrument certification
Requirements for Hire

- Nurses
  - Minimum of 5 years experience in ED and/or ICU
  - PALS, ACLS, PHTLS (or BTLS), NRP, TNATC, ABLS, etc.
  - Motivated
  - Team player
Ongoing Training After Hire

Advanced procedures
Aircraft safety
Radio communications
Night vision goggles
Flight physiology
CAMTS requirements
Types of Calls

• Inter-Facility Transports

• Scene Calls
Inter-Facility Transports

• Cardiac: Surgical / Interventional Therapy
  » CHF / Pulmonary Edema
  » IABP & VAD’s

• Medical: GI Bleed & Liver Failure
  » Sepsis
  » Other

• Pediatric: Cardiac
  » Pulmonary
  » Neonatal
  » Trauma
Inter-Facility Transports

- Intracranial hemorrhage
- Aortic dissection
- OB
- Non-trauma Surgical
- Pediatrics
- Organ Transplant
Head Injuries
Head Injuries
Spinal Cord Injuries
Post Surgery
Penetrating Trauma
Compromised Airway
Motor Vehicle Crashes
Pediatric Trauma
Mass Causalities
Motorcycle Trauma
FLIGHT NURSING
Flight Nurse Responsibilities

• Safety: Personal Crew Patient

Safety is the First Priority in All Transports!
Flight Nurse Responsibilities

• Patient Care:
  • Primary & secondary assessment
    » Advanced airway skills
    » Advanced procedure skills
    » Protocols
Flight Nursing

- Interpersonal Skills
  - Dealing with patients and families at times of great stress
  - Other agencies
  - Healthcare providers/refering hospitals
  - PR/Marketing
Flight Nursing Skills

• Technical skills
  – Math for Drug Calculations

• Computer skills
Flight Nursing Skills

Teaching Skills
Work Environment

- weather extremes for pts and crew
- Night ops
Flight Nursing – Impact on Your Family

- All Shifts
- Late Flights
- Stressful
- FUN
- Very Rewarding
For more information contact ASTNA:
Nikole Good, Executive Director
13918 E. Mississippi Avenue, Suite 215, Aurora, CO
Phone: 303-344-0457 FAX: 800-937-9890