



Department of Emergency Medicine

DRAFT

## **Medical Clearance Guidelines for Psychiatric patients in the Emergency Department**

### ***Definition***

Patients presenting with psychiatric complaints will be examined and assessed by the emergency physician for any significant contributing medical causes of those complaints. Medical clearance of patients with psychiatric complaints should indicate that:

- Within reasonable medical certainty, there is no known contributory medical cause for the patient's presenting psychiatric complaints that requires acute intervention in a medical setting.
- Within reasonable medical certainty, the patient is medically stable enough for the transfer to the intended dispositional setting for psychiatric evaluation.
- The emergency physician who has indicated medical clearance shall, based on his or her examination of the patient at that point in time, indicate in the patient's medical record :”Medically Cleared” and the patient's foreseeable needs of medical supervision and treatment.

### ***Medical Clearance Components:***

No consensus in the literature was found that delineated a proven, standardized approach to the evaluation and management of psychiatric patients requiring medical evaluation in the emergency department.

1. Vital signs including blood sugar performed if indicated.
2. Focused medical history and physical performed as guided by presentation. Please see Medical Clearance Guidelines checklist for essential components.
3. Appropriate investigations performed where indicated by history and physical.



***Low Medical Risk Criteria:***

The literature recommends that routine diagnostic screening and application of medical technology for the patient who meets the below low medical risk criteria is of very low yield and therefore not recommended unless indicated by the presentation.

- Age between 15 and 55 years old
  - No acute medical complaints
  - No new psychiatric or physical symptoms
  - No evidence of a pattern of substance (alcohol or drug) abuse
  - Normal physical examination that includes, at the minimum:
- Normal vital signs (with oxygen saturation if available).
- Normal (age appropriate) assessment of gait, strength and fluency of speech
- Normal (age appropriate) assessment of memory and concentration



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<b>Medical Clearance Checklist Guidelines</b>		
<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<p><b>1. Does the patient have new psychiatric condition?</b></p> <p><b>2. Any history of active medical illness needing evaluation?</b></p> <p><b>3. Any abnormal vital signs?</b></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Temperature &gt;38°C</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Pulse outside of 50 to 120 beats/min</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Blood pressure &lt;90 systolic or &gt;200;&gt;120 diastolic</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Respiratory rate &gt;24 breaths/min</p> <p><b>4. Focused physical exam directed by history and presentation: Any abnormal physical exam?</b></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><b><u>To include only if appropriate:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Acute and chronic trauma (including signs of victimization/abuse)</li> <li>o Breath sounds</li> <li>o Cardiac dysrhythmia, murmurs</li> <li>o Skin and vascular signs: diaphoresis, pallor, cyanosis, edema</li> <li>o Abdominal distention, bowel sounds</li> <li>o Neurological with particular focus on:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Gait</li> <li>ii. Pupil symmetry, size</li> <li>iii. Nystagmus</li> <li>iv. Paralysis</li> <li>v. meningeal signs</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>5. Any abnormal mental status indicating medical illness such as lethargic, stuporous, comatose, spontaneously fluctuating mental status? [Mental Status Exam]</b></p> <p style="padding-left: 80px;">If no to all of the above questions, no further evaluation is necessary. Go to question #9</p> <p style="padding-left: 80px;">If yes to any of the above questions go to question #6, tests may be indicated.</p> <p><b>6. Selective Diagnostic testing should be guided by the history and physical exam.</b></p> <p><b>7. Diagnoses: Psychiatric _____</b></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Medical _____</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Substance abuse _____</p> <p><b>8. Medical follow-up or treatment required on psychiatry unit:</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p><b>9. I have had adequate time to evaluate the patient and the patient's medical condition is sufficiently stable for psychiatric evaluation and does not pose a significant risk of deterioration.</b></p> <p style="text-align: right; padding-right: 40px;">_____, MD</p>		