

Curbside Consultations

The formality of a “curbside consult” is determined by whether:

- ◆ a contractual agreement created a relationship,
- ◆ actions by you or your employees implied your willingness to establish a physician-patient relationship, or
- ◆ treatment or diagnostic decisions by your consulting colleague indicate substantial reliance on your advice.

If a curbside consult takes on any of these characteristics, follow up on the patient’s care as you would for a formal consult.

Examples

- ◆ Simple problems that can be answered without considering too many variables are well suited to *informal consultation*.
- ◆ Complex issues that require deeper investigation and research by the consultant are better suited to *formal consultation*.
- ◆ Repeated requests for consultations on a particular patient may indicate that the problem is more complex than initially indicated and therefore a *formal consultation* is appropriate.

Advantages

For the physician seeking advice, informal consultations can save time and money. Instead of independently searching the literature, an informal consultant can provide direct assistance at no charge to the patient or physician. The physician seeking informal advice may also feel less risk of losing the patient to the consultant. The physician providing information may experience academic or professional satisfaction from assisting a colleague. Such consultations may also promote future formal consultations.

Disadvantages

The advice given may be based on incomplete, inaccurate, or a biased history which may result in incorrect or inaccurate advice. Complex questions that require time and consideration of multiple factors are best left to formal consultation. Informal consultations also leave a physician uncompensated for what otherwise would have been a compensable formal consultation.

Documentation of Curbside Consultations

The name of the consulting physician appearing in the patient’s medical record could be viewed as establishing a physician-patient relationship. To avoid difficulty, permission should be sought from the consultant before his or her name is listed in the record.

Communications

with

Patients/

Providers