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Department of Health and Family Services

Numbered Memo Series 08-01

February 2008

To: First Responder and Ambulance Service Providers
Service Medical Directors
EMS Training Centers

From: Brian Litza, Chief
Wisconsin Emergency Medical Services Section
Bureau of Local Health Support and EMS

RE: ETC Combitube vs. King-LTD Airway

There have been considerable misconceptions, rumors, and messages regarding the use of the various devices in pre-hospital care in Wisconsin. One such device is the King-LTD airway. Approval of a non-visualized advanced airway at all levels was implemented as a means to control a patient's airway (pre-hospital) and prevent aspiration of stomach contents. Several concerns have been raised regarding its (King-LTD) use in our state. The manufacturer materials advise that the patient should have an empty stomach. In addition it requires some placement manipulation once it is inserted.

The state office is not in the habit of endorsing or approving every new device that come into the market. However, some items need our attention due to their implications and use. This is an airway device and the distributor and manufacturer had asked us to review the product. In such a review we must take into consideration the ease of use, effectiveness of the device, the cost to the services, and the training that may be required by both the services and the training centers. Additionally we need to look at the system effects for both pre-hospital and hospital interactions with the device. We are charged with assuring the safety of the public and the quality of EMS in the state.

The Physician Advisory Committee (PAC) has discussed this device on several previous occasions. There continues to be more demands for its use by providers and newer studies have been completed. This has been an on-going discussion with PAC but the last two-meetings, where it was slated for a final review and discussion, were cancelled due to weather and other issues. We assure you that the final decision will be rendered after their next meeting. To date, with PAC's input, the King-LTD airway will not be approved at the Medical First Responder level. It is approved as an "emergency airway" (second to intubation) at the Intermediate and Paramedic levels (with operational plan approval). The discussion will continue, and it has yet to be determined, whether it will be available as an alternative to the Combitube at the Basic and/or Intermediate Technician levels.

The EMS Section will keep providers informed of any future decisions on this issue. Until we notify providers otherwise, please operate under the above guideline.