PEDIATRIC EMERGENCIES

APPARENT LIFE-THREATENING EVENT (ALTE)

An Apparent Life-Threatening Event (ALTE) was formally known as a "near-miss SIDS" episode. This is an event that is frightening to the observer (may think the infant has died) and involves some combination of apnea, color change, marked change in muscle tone, choking, or gagging. It usually occurs in infants less than 12 months of age, though any child with symptoms described under 2 years of age may be considered an ALTE. Most patients have a normal physical exam when assessed by responding personnel.

Approximately half of the cases have no known cause, but the other half do have a significant underlying cause such as infection, seizures, tumors, respiratory or airway problems, child abuse, or SIDS. Because of the high incidence of problems and the normal assessment usually seen, there is potential for significant problems if the child's symptoms are not seriously addressed.

1. Obtain history, including duration and severity of event, whether patient awake or asleep at time of episode, and what resuscitative measures were done by the parent or caretaker
2. Obtain medical history, including history of chronic diseases, seizure activity, current or recent infections, gastroesophageal reflux, recent trauma, medication history. Obtain history with regard to mixing of formula
3. Perform comprehensive exam, including general appearance, skin color, interaction with environment, or evidence of trauma
4. Treat identifiable cause if appropriate
5. Transport
6. If treatment/transport is refused by parent or guardian, contact base hospital to consult prior to leaving patient.