



## **EMS Information Bulletin 2016-08**

**DATE:** September 2, 2016

**SUBJECT:** Pre-Hospital Registered Nurse Scope of Practice and Administration of Anesthetic Agents

**TO:** Pennsylvania EMS Providers/ Agencies

**THRU:** Richard L. Gibbons, Director  
Bureau of EMS *R. L. Gibbons*

**FROM:** Douglas F. Kupas, MD, Commonwealth EMS Medical Director  
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The Department of Health (Department), Bureau of Emergency Medical Services, has received inquiries related to pre-hospital registered nurses (PHRNs) administering sedative anesthetic agents such as etomidate, ketamine and propofol in the out-of-hospital setting in regards to a potential conflict with other regulations related to the practice of registered nurses.

In Pennsylvania, a PHRN is a distinct certified level of EMS provider that functions at a level above an advanced emergency medical technician (AEMT) as identified in the Emergency Medical Services System Act, 35 Pa.C.S. §§ 8101-8157. A PHRN is a registered nurse that has additional education, knowledge and skills competency related to the management of emergency medical conditions. PHRNs are certified to practice as EMS providers in Pennsylvania by the Department.

EMS providers of all levels, including PHRNs, have a scope of practice that is established by the Department. Within the established scope of practice, these providers follow Department-approved protocols or orders from a medical command physician. The Department also publishes a list of approved medications that may be administered by each level of EMS provider within his or her scope of practice.

Additionally, a PHRN may provide additional care and administer additional medications as permitted under the scope of practice of a registered nurse as regulated by the Nursing Practice Act, when appropriately supervised by a physician. This ability to expand the PHRN scope of practice with additional skills with the scope of a registered nurse does not permit the PHRN to

use skills or practice medical care that exceeds both the scope of a registered nurse and the EMS scope for the type of EMS service involved.

Because EMS providers above the level of AEMT, including PHRNs and paramedics, have skills and competency in airway management and the use of advanced airway devices, the scope of practice of these individuals currently includes the administration of some medications that are classified as anesthetic agents. Use of these medications is regulated by the scope of practice and EMS medication formulary of each provider level, the Department-approved EMS protocols and any other restrictions placed upon their use by the Department.

The most current specific information related to these scopes of practice and medications can be located in the following source:

- Scope of Practice for Emergency Medical Services Providers (published in *Pennsylvania Bulletin* at 45 Pa.B. 5463).
- Approved and Required Medications Lists for Emergency Medical Services Agencies and Emergency Medical Services Providers (published in *Pennsylvania Bulletin* at 45 Pa.B. 5451).
- Department-approved EMS Protocols, including Statewide ALS Protocols and Statewide Critical Care Transport Protocols (published on the Department's website at <http://www.health.pa.gov/My%20Health/Emergency%20Medical%20Services/EMS%20Statewide%20Protocol/Pages/default.aspx#.V8bpi6DD8uS>).