



# STATE OF NEW YORK DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

433 River Street, Suite 303, Troy, New York 12180-2299

Richard F. Daines, M.D.  
*Commissioner*

September 14, 2007  
DPACS: 07-14

Dear Chief Executive Officer:

The New York State Department of Health has been collecting data through the Health Emergency Response Data System (HERDS) regarding your emergency department and bed availability status since October 2004. The data is collected weekly reflecting the “snapshot” of hospitals’ patients awaiting admission and the bed availability on Wednesday mornings at 10 am. The data collected has assisted us in evaluating HERDS usage, overcrowding and seasonal trends. It has also served as a weekly exercise for hospital staff to familiarize themselves with the access and functionality of HERDS in the event of an emergency activation of your hospital.

Those of you familiar with the Institution of Medicine Report, entitled *Hospital-based Emergency Care: At the Breaking Point*, know that the issue of emergency department overcrowding in hospitals across the nation is a problem that has escalated over time. To address this issue, the Department convened the Emergency Department Overcrowding Workgroup in November 2006. The workgroup consists of representatives from hospitals (small and large, academic and community, and for all across the state). Representation included physicians, nurses, administrators, as well as hospital association representatives. The workgroup has been tasked with the responsibility of making recommendations to alleviate the problems associated with overcrowding.

Evaluation of more data regarding diversion and emergency department are needed to succeed in making recommendations in relieving the overcrowding. To that end, the Department will be requesting HERDS data on patients awaiting admissions and bed availability by type, be increased from one day (Wednesday at 10am) to a total of three days a week.

The data will now be collected in a “snapshot” of time for actual patients and bed numbers at 10am Wednesdays, and 8pm Mondays and Fridays. The data questionnaire will break out the patients by adult and pediatric, type of bed they will be admitted to, and the general time category in hours that they have spent in the Emergency department awaiting admission to a unit in the hospital. You will continue to have 24hrs to enter the information from the prescribed date and time.

The additional data collection will begin October 1, 2007. A reminder will be sent via the Departments notification system in late September.

I appreciate your cooperation in this process as this will allow the Department to access the current emergency department activity in New York State and create guidance that may assist in the provision of safe and timely care for patients in the State.

Sincerely,

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Office of Health Systems Management

Mary Ellen Hennessy  
Deputy Director  
Division of Primary and Acute  
Care Services