

Dear Triage Nursing

Re : Addison's Disease

The current health care crisis, with unacceptably long wait times for patients in the emergency department has led to inconvenience for some and a denial of access to timely health care for others. While presentations such as chest pain, shortness of breath and trauma lend themselves to straightforward triage, patients with Addison's disease represent a special sub-population.

Please be aware: patients with Addison's disease who present with seemingly trivial complaints (e.g. the flu) may be at risk for life threatening events. While it is often believed that these patients may self medicate with steroids, or that they cannot be in imminent danger if they present with a normal (supine) blood pressure reading, neither of these is universally true. Accordingly, these patients are often in danger of acute adrenal insufficiency. Please triage these patients with care.

David Pledger, MD, FRCPC

Patient's Name: _____ Home Tel: _____

Family Doctor: _____ Tel: _____

Specialist: _____ Tel: _____

Medications and Dosages: _____

Diagnoses: _____

Addison's Disease, primary adrenal failure, is characterized by chronic glucocorticoid and mineralocorticoid deficiency. **Adrenal crisis is an acute, life-threatening emergency.**

The symptoms of Addisonian crisis include:

- Extreme fatigue, drowsiness, possible mental confusion and loss of consciousness.
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhoea.
- Low blood pressure, low blood sugar, high potassium, low sodium, abnormal heart rate.
- Abdominal pain.
- Severe headache, feeling extremely cold, possible fever.