



ALAMEDA COUNTY HEALTH CARE SERVICES AGENCY

Colleen Chawla, HCSA Director

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 15, 2024
TO: Alameda County Paramedics and EMTs
FROM: Alameda County EMS Agency
SUBJECT: Impact of *People v. Cichuniec and Cooper* Verdict on EMS Industry and Clinical Practice

Dear EMS colleagues,

As you may be aware, on Dec. 22, 2023, the verdict in the *People v. Cichuniec and Cooper* trial involving the death of Elijah McClain was announced by an Adams County District Court jury in Colorado. Mr. McClain, a 23-year-old Black man, tragically lost his life in 2019 after an encounter in Aurora, Colorado, with law enforcement and subsequent administration of ketamine by paramedics. The verdict, which found two paramedics guilty of criminally negligent homicide, has sparked significant public attention and debate, raising important questions about the role of emergency medical services (EMS) clinicians in similar situations.

This case serves as a reminder that providing excellent patient care remains the top priority for all emergency care and requires continuous quality control. The scenes where chemical restraint is likely to be used are often chaotic. Reviewing protocols for midazolam routes and dosages for sedation may increase administration accuracy and patient safety. As with any medication administration, continuous monitoring and reassessment is a key component to patient care.

In the coming six months the Alameda County Emergency Medical Services Agency will be reviewing our existing policies and protocols related to:

- Patient assessment
- Use of chemical and/or physical restraint
- Administration of weight-based medications

The goal of our review is to update these policies and protocols to more clearly outline when it is appropriate to use chemical restraint, eliminate weight-based medication dosages when possible, and to develop education on assessment and treatment of behavioral health patients—all with the goal of improving patient care and reducing errors. We will share any prospective updates through our normal collaborative processes such as Quality Council, keeping everyone informed and engaged in our ongoing efforts.

On behalf of the Alameda County EMS Agency, I thank you for your dedication and commitment to clinical care and the communities that we serve. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to EMS Medical Director Dr. Zita Konik at Zita.Konik@acgov.org or your immediate supervisor.

Sincerely,

Lauri McFadden
Director, Alameda County Emergency Medical Services Agency