

**STATE OF ARIZONA • EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES AND TRAUMA SYSTEM**

**Utilization of Over-the-Counter Medications by Arizona EMS Agencies**

**Background**

Over-the-counter (OTC) medications are FDA-regulated substances that are readily available to the general public. Although regulated by the FDA, the general public may access and self-administer these medications without the advice or prescription from a licensed physician or other licensed healthcare professional.

The Bureau of Emergency Medical Services and Trauma System (BEMSTS) does not currently regulate the administration of OTC medications by Emergency Medical Care Technicians (EMCTs). In the absence of regulation, OTC medications should be treated like other FDA-approved products that are not regulated by BEMSTS, but are used in EMS operations.

**Process**

The Medical Direction Commission recommends that the following clinical guidelines be met by EMS agencies that supply, carry, or distribute OTC medications:

1. EMCTs may distribute OTC medications while involved in wildfire operations, special events, search and rescue, or when performing disaster relief.
2. OTC medications may be distributed by EMCTs at the request of an individual and for the individual's self-administration only.
3. EMCTs should only carry OTC medications approved by their medical directors.
4. Medical directors should ensure EMCTs have appropriate knowledge of available OTC medications and the common contraindications of those OTC medications.
5. Medical directors should develop a policy that outlines the types of OTC medications and circumstances in which those medications can be made available for self-administration.
6. OTC medications should be distributed in single dose packaging with instructions on the appropriate use of the medication kept on hand.