ADMISSION, DISCHARGE & REFERRAL CRITERIA

Broad Principles

Whilst specific conditions may have their own indications for admission, discharge or referral to the next level of care, these are often influenced by the socio-economic circumstances of affected children and their families or by the skills or facilities present at different health institutions providing care. It is therefore more important to identify principles guiding the admission, discharge or referral of sick children that can be applied to all clinical settings and to compliment these principles with more specific guidelines for individual disease entities.

Reasons for Admission:

- To make a diagnosis
- For initiation of complex treatment
- When the emergency care or management required cannot be provided by the package of services available at the lower level of care:
  - Oxygen
  - Intravenous fluids
  - Parenteral therapy
  - Nebulisers
  - NG feeds
  - Monitoring of fluid balance etc.
- For monitoring when possible deterioration is anticipated

When to Discharge:

- When a child is stable, or
- The level of care required can be provided by the package of services available at the lower level of care

Reasons for Referral:

- Children with a diagnosis but who still require investigation of an underlying cause, eg nutritional rickets, hypertension, etc
- Diagnostic dilemmas - children requiring a diagnosis
- Poor response to treatment
- Development of complications
- Real or anticipated deterioration in clinical condition
- Required management not provided for by the package of services available at that level of care

The urgency of a referral should be determined by the degree of threat to life or well-being.

- All referrals must respect the culture, beliefs and practices of the child and his/her family
- Families must understand and accept the purpose of the referral
- Health care workers must recognize and avoid futile referrals which serve no purpose
- Only stable patients should be transported. Use the "Neonatal/Paediatric Patient transfer Monitoring Sheet" to the assist you to assess, stabilise and monitor the condition of the child, and to track your transfer plans