

## OTHER VIEWS

# Emergency services: Quality assured

**L**ast Tuesday, the Orange County Commission received the report and recommendations of an emergency-medical-services task force. An editorial in the *Sentinel* Wednesday cited a report by Dr. Jay Falk as one of the reasons for the establishment of that task force. Falk's report stated that 25 percent of the endotracheal intubations performed by paramedics in the field and transported to Orlando Regional Healthcare System were done improperly.

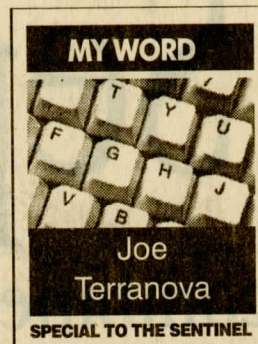
This information raised great concern. Therefore, I contacted Dennis Sargent, chief of fire and EMS for Winter Park, and asked him what our experience was with the intubation issue. He said that we have not had one case of an improper intubation by a Winter Park Fire Department paramedic reported to us. The department's quality-assurance program, which reviews all of the medical responses, likewise, has not found this to be a problem.

Sargent stated that endotracheal intubation is a critical skill to provide an airway and ventilation to patients who are not breathing. If an intubation is not done properly, the patient will not survive. With this in mind, Sargent added that proficiency in this skill is necessary for a person to practice as a paramedic. Sar-

gent also mentioned that, at times, the endotracheal tube can become dislodged; this can occur during treatment and/or during transfer to another unit or to the hospital. Therefore, paramedics are taught to check the lungs repeatedly for ventilation sounds to ensure that the airway is maintained.

The Winter Park Fire Department operates a full-service, single-tier, advanced life-support (ALS) emergency-medical service within the city limits. By single tier, we mean that every unit dispatched to a medical call is an ALS unit. The first paramedic to contact and treat the patient will be the one who accompanies the patient to the hospital and gives the condition report to the hospital staff. This limits the number of times that the patient is transferred.

We also provide the same level of service to all of the surrounding jurisdictions when their units are busy on other calls. This service is essentially "borderless," with the closest unit being dispatched automatically. Winter Park and all of the surrounding units operate under



the same set of protocols or standing orders that are issued by the county medical director. Dr. Robert Faber and Dr. Edgardo Rivera have been outstanding in providing medical control and advice to our paramedics and EMTs.

In conclusion, if there is a problem in the emergency-medical-service system, the problem must be dealt with swiftly and fairly so as not to endanger future patients. It is not appropriate to make blanket statements that discredit all providers.

Our primary focus must be to provide the best possible care for the citizens of our community. The Winter Park Fire Rescue Department will continue to exceed any minimum standards that are set by the state and/or the county. We will also continue to be team players and good neighbors. However, when we perceive that something is not correct, or not in the best interest of our citizens, we will continue to stand up for their rights.

*Joe Terranova is the mayor of Winter Park.*