2.18 OPIOID WITHDRAWAL

BLS Treatment

- Position of comfort.
- NPO except as noted below.
- **Oxygen** as indicated.

ALS Treatment

OPIATE WITHDRAWAL

Assess for symptoms of opioid withdrawal, which may include diaphoresis, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, and agitation.

- For symptomatic suspected opioid withdrawal due to drug abstinence or Naloxone administration, perform a COWS (Clinical Opiate Withdrawal Score). If COWS greater than or equal to 8, assess for Buprenorphine/Suboxone eligibility (see Appendix A).

COWS Link and QR Code

Notes

- Document the following:
  - Administration of Naloxone/Buprenorphine (Route, Dose, Complications)
  - Initial and Secondary COWS
  - Reason for Non-Enrollment (Exclusion Criteria)
  - Reason if Non-Transport of Enrolled Patient

- A patient is considered enrolled by receiving their first dose of Buprenorphine by EMS.

- If a patient receives Buprenorphine but does not wish to be transported, a Base Hospital Physician shall be contacted under Policy 4040 for non-transport. Consider contacting the Community Paramedicine Captain (CP5) at (628) 200-1139 for additional resources and follow up information for the patient.

Appendix A – Clinical Opiate Withdrawal Score (COWS)

Clinical Opioid Withdrawal Scale (COWS)

Anxiety or Irritability
0 None
1 Reports increasing irritability or anxiousness
2 Obviously irritable or anxious
4 Too irritable to participate or affecting participation

Bone or Joint Aches
If patient was having pain previously, only additional pain attributed to withdrawal is scored
0 Not present
1 Mild diffuse discomfort
2 Reports severe diffuse aching of joints/muscles
4 Pt rubbing joints or muscles and unable to be still

GI Upset *Over last ½ hour*
0 No GI symptoms
1 Stomach cramps
2 Nausea or loose stool
3 Vomiting or diarrhea
5 Multiple episodes of diarrhea or vomiting

Gooseflesh Skin
0 Skin is smooth
3 Piloerection of skin can be felt or arm hairs standing up
5 Prominent piloerection

Pupil Size
0 Pupils pinned or normal sized for ambient light
1 Pupils possibly larger than normal for ambient light
2 Pupils moderately dilated
5 Pupils very dilated

Runny Nose or Tearing
Not accounted for by cold symptoms nor allergies
0 Not present
1 Nasal stuffiness or unusually moist eyes
2 Nose running or eyes tearing
4 Nose constantly running or tears streaming down face

Resting Heart Rate
Measured after sitting for 1 minute
0 ≤ 80 BPM
1 81-100 BPM
2 101-120 BPM
4 ≥ 120 BPM

Restlessness *Observed during assessment*
0 Able to sit still
1 Reports difficulty sitting still, but able to do so
3 Frequent shifting or extraneous movement of legs/arms
5 Unable to sit still for more than a few seconds

Tremor *Observation of outstretched hands*
0 No tremors
1 Tremor can be felt but not observed
2 Slight tremor observable
4 Gross tremors or muscle twitching

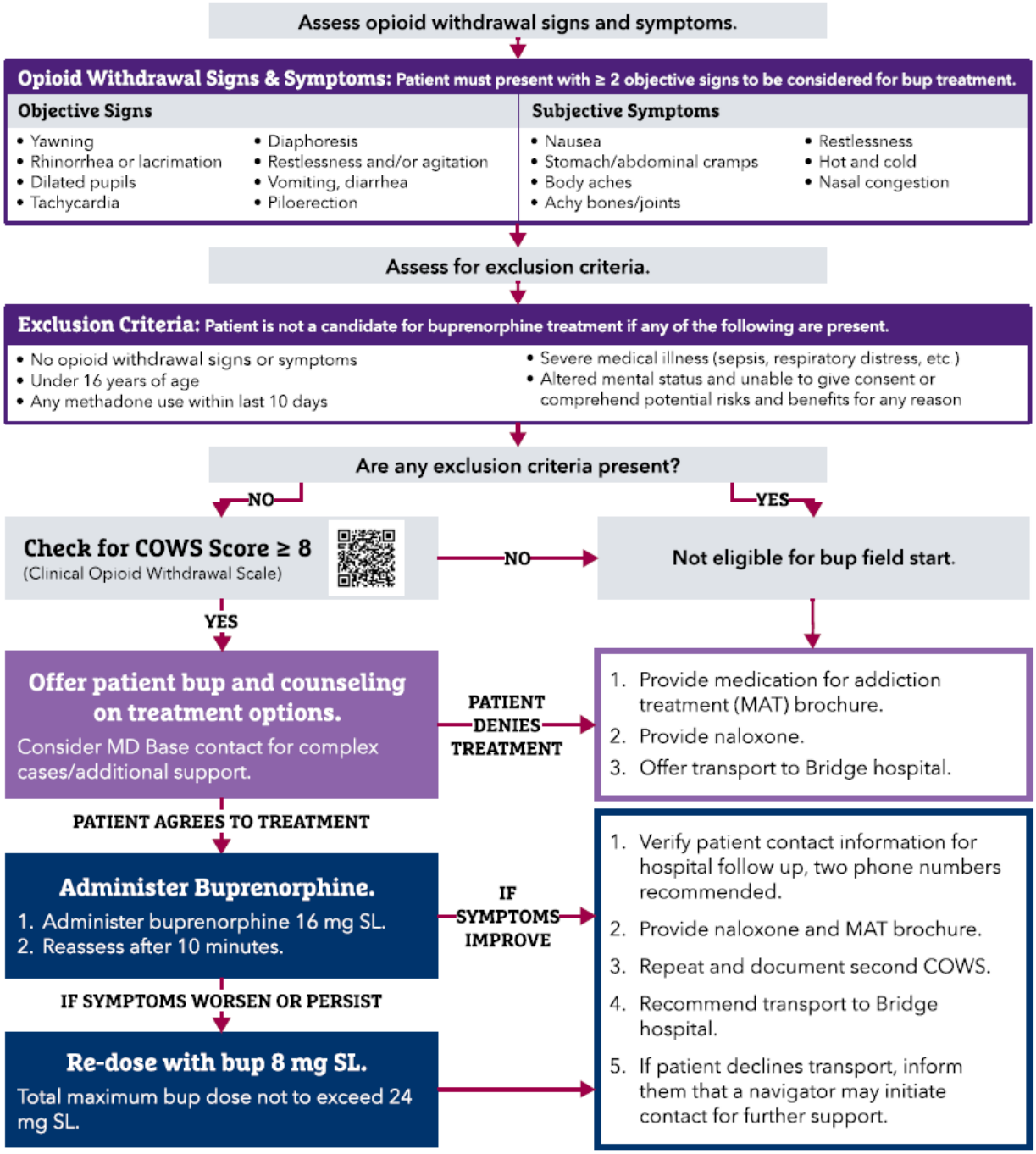
Yawning *Observation during assessment*
0 No yawning
1 Yawning once or twice during assessment
2 Yawning three or more times during assessment
4 Yawning several times/minute

Sweating
Over past ½ hour not accounted for by environment or activity
0 No report of chills or flushing
1 Subjective report of chills or flushing
2 Flushed or observable moistness to face
3 Beads of sweat on brow or face
4 Sweat streaming off face

TOTAL COWS SCORE:
5-12 = mild
13-24 = moderate
25-36 = moderately severe
> 36 = severe withdrawal

2.18 OPIOID WITHDRAWAL

Appendix B – Buprenorphine Local Optional Scope of Practice Protocol



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