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Responsibility for Admitted Patients

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The American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) believes that the best patient care occurs when there is no ambiguity as to which physician is responsible for each patient. Because admitted patients are sometimes held in the emergency department during the admission process, confusion may occur regarding which physician is responsible for an admitted patient's care.

For these reasons, ACEP endorses the following principles concerning admitted patients:

- Hospital policy and procedures should clearly delineate that once an admitting physician has accepted a patient, that admitting physician has assumed responsibility for the patient.
- The responsibility for an admitted patient's medical care rests with the admitting physician, regardless of the location of an admitted patient within the hospital.
- Emergency physicians may provide care to any admitted patient during a medical emergency.
- Emergency physicians should not be obligated to provide care to admitted patients during a medical emergency unless indemnified by the hospital or covered by the facility's professional liability insurance policy.