Paramedics Encyclopedia Article

Paramedics

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Contents

Paramedics Encyclopedia Article.....1

Contents.....2

Paramedics.....3

Paramedics

Literally meaning "beside doctor," paramedics refers to two groups of health care workers, both of which assist physicians in treating patients and share direct responsibility for their care. Neither has training as extensive as that required for physicians.

One type of paramedic is specifically trained for emergency situations. These individuals, also known as emergency medical technicians, are often the first people at the scene of an accident or other event where people have been injured or need to be rescued. They provide patients with emergency care (i.e., resuscitation) to stabilize them, and then accompany them in an ambulance to a hospital emergency room to inform the attending physician of their status.

Also included in this category are nurse practitioners and physician's assistants, although these people usually deal with patients at the hospital or doctor's office rather than in the field. They perform much of the routine work required in patient care, such as drawing blood, giving injections, taking medical histories, and providing basic medical care and diagnosis.

The other type of paramedic comprises the general group of highly trained professionals who support physicians, including x-ray and laboratory technicians and physical therapists.