



Issue: Head Immobilisation

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Background: Cervical spine stabilisation is an important feature in the best practice management of trauma. The use of cervical collars in association with support to either side of the head is frequently practiced. In the remote context, sand bags or 1L IV fluid bags wrapped in towels are used to provide support and are secured by tape to stabilise the head.

Is the current practice used in Remote acceptable, or should a dedicated head immobiliser be provided?

Discussion: Various dedicated head immobilising devices are commercially available in Australia, and Best Practice Group have reviewed some of these products. Those reviewed do not have the capacity for securing to different ambulance trolleys or other stretcher devices. This makes them essentially no more stable than the current practice. Significantly, the cost and inability to track items once clients are transferred also makes it unreasonable to support the widespread implementation of these products.

NT, WA and NSW St John Ambulance currently use cervical collars and sand bags or 1L IV fluid bags wrapped in towels. Dedicated head immobiliser products are not used by St John due to expense and difficulty with tracking equipment when transferring clients.

Sand bags are not readily available in Australia and are relatively expensive to purchase and freight. IV fluid bags are more easily obtained in health services and therefore are the preferred of these two options.

The current practice of using 1L IV fluid bags wrapped in towels placed either side of the clients head, in conjunction with cervical collars is considered to remain the appropriate practice for supporting cervical immobilisation by Remote Health staff.

Consultation: St Johns Ambulance NT, NSW, WA

Trauma and Critical Care Unit, RDH

National Critical Care Trauma Response Centre (NCCTRC), Darwin

References: Product information.

CRANA Clinical Procedures Manual pp 44-53

Outcome: Remote Health supports the use of 1L IV fluid bags wrapped in a towel to aid immobilisation of the head when a client requires cervical spinal precautions. Bags need to be placed on both sides of the client's head, in conjunction with cervical collars, and taped to reduce movement.