

Guidance for the Repatriation of International Critical Care Patients to UK Hospitals

National Medical Leads, Adult Critical Care Networks

- All UK residents have a right to timely access to NHS facilities, including those who become ill whilst abroad.
 - The repatriation of all patients to the hospital that serves their home residence should be expected to occur within the timeframe of internal repatriations within that ODN (normally 48 hours).
- Critical care units across the world differ significantly in the resources and care available and, in many instances, may not be able to deliver care of a standard that would be acceptable in UK critical care units.
 - Where patients are receiving care that may be expected to be limited, all efforts must be made to repatriate the patient immediately.
- All requests for repatriation must involve discussion with the critical care consultant in the receiving hospital, in line with the guidelines for that network.
 - Requests for repatriation of UK residents from hospitals abroad may be facilitated by commercial organisations responsible for the transfer of the patient to the UK. Whilst, where possible, the standard of information and communication required for a UK interhospital transfer is desirable, in some cases this may not be feasible and transfer should not be delayed due to incomplete information, particularly in the case where the patient is not receiving care of a standard that would be expected within the UK.
 - The responsibility for patient care during transfer remains with the organisation undertaking this and should be managed with reference to the national professional standards of the country where the transfer company is based.
- The organisation and management of international repatriation is often complex and once any patient has left the hospital caring for them the UK receiving hospital is responsible for accepting the patient. If changes in circumstances made admission impossible that hospital is required to manage this just as though the patient was in their own emergency unit.
- The UK receiving hospital should inform their trust infection prevention and control (IPC) team at the time of the request to enable an appropriate risk assessment to be undertaken and relevant control measures implemented on arrival (including potentially isolation and screening). If the trust IPC team require additional advice on risk assessment and management, this can be sought from PHE via their local health protection team (<https://www.gov.uk/health-protection-team>).
- If a complex multiple patient repatriation across multiple trusts is planned, this should be coordinated through your regional or national NHS colleagues and the UKHPA, via UKHSA local health protection teams (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/contacts-phe-health-protection-teams>).