Education Express

Improve the Safety of Clinical Alarm Systems

Clinical Alarm Systems: Reducing Patient Harm
The Joint Commission National Patient Safety Goal 6

Focus: Managing clinical alarm systems with the most direct relationship to patient safety.

Purpose: Improve staff awareness related to **alarm management** of continuous cardiac and/or pulse oximetry monitors, ultimately influencing the safety, effectiveness, and efficiency of patient care.

- **Alarm settings** should be **individualized** to the patient based on **clinical presentation** and the patient's **plan of care.**

- **RNs** and **providers** are **responsible** for **assessing and reassessing** the **patient's clinical status.** Alarms should be individualized and changed on a continuous basis, based on the patient's clinical status.

- **RNs** and **providers** have the **ability** and **authority** to **set** and **change alarm parameters** based on individual patient status, clinical judgement, and patient safety.

- **RNs** and **providers** also have the **authority** to **set alarm parameters to "off"** based on individual patient status (i.e. terminal wean), clinical judgement and patient safety. **Exceptions** would include **invasive lines (i.e. arterial lines) that are not to be turned "off."**

- **RTs** have the **ability** and **authority** to **set and change respiratory** and **pulse oximetry parameters** in collaboration with nursing and providers.

- **Clinical engineering** is **responsible for preventative maintenance** of monitors.

- **All RNs, RTs, and providers** are **responsible** for the **continuous monitoring** and **response to alarms:**
  - Personally check patients and evaluate the reason for alarms before resetting.
  - Temporarily muted or suspended alarms during routine procedures must be reactivated.
  - Temporarily muted or suspended alarms during respiratory treatments must be reactivated.
  - Communicate to the rest of the healthcare team when alarms are adjusted from the default settings or previous parameters.
  - Please ensure settings are accurate, proper equipment operation, and the continuous monitors are working. Any concerns should be escalated to clinical leadership and clinical engineering or Biomed.

Highlights

Alarm management ultimately impacts the safety, effectiveness and efficiency of patient care!

Multiple alarms and the resulting noise may desensitize staff - causing them to miss or ignore important alarms.

Standardization contributes to safe alarm system management.