
Project Reduces 'Alarm Fatigue' in Hospitals



While the sound of monitor alarms in hospitals can save patients' lives, the frequency with which the monitors go off can also lead to "alarm fatigue," meaning caregivers become desensitised to the ubiquitous beeping. To address this problem, researchers at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center (OH, USA) developed a standardised, team-based approach to reducing cardiac monitor alarms.

With the new standardised process, the median number of daily cardiac alarms decreased from 180 to 40, according to researchers. Meanwhile, caregiver compliance with the process increased from 38 percent to 95 percent. Results of the study have been published in the eFirst pages of the journal *Pediatrics*.

New Approach Can Serve as a Model for Other Hospitals

"Cardiac monitors constitute the majority of alarms throughout the hospital," said the study's lead author Christopher Dandoy, MD, a physician in the Cancer and Blood Diseases Institute at Cincinnati Children's. "We think our approach to reducing monitor alarms can serve as a model for other hospitals throughout the country."

The main accrediting body for healthcare organisations and programmes, the Joint Commission, reported 80 alarm-related deaths between January 2009 and June 2012.

The research team developed a standardised cardiac monitor care process on the 24-bed, paediatric bone marrow transplant unit at Cincinnati Children's. The project included these key components:

- A process for initial ordering of monitor parameters based on age-appropriate standards;
- Daily replacement of electrodes in a manner that was pain-free for patients;
- Individualised daily assessment of cardiac monitor parameters; and
- A reliable method for appropriate discontinuation of the monitors.

Staff Work More Efficiently with Fewer False Alarms

"With fewer false alarms, the staff can address significant alarms more promptly," Dr. Dandoy pointed out. "We believe the roles and responsibilities entailed in this process can be applied to most units with cardiac monitor care."

Dr. Dandoy conducted the study along with colleagues in the Cancer and Blood Diseases Institute and in the James M. Anderson Center for Health Systems Excellence at Cincinnati Children's.

Cincinnati Children's, a non-profit organisation, ranks third in the country amongst all Honor Roll hospitals in U.S. News & World Report's 2014 Best Children's Hospitals. The hospital is one of the top three recipients of paediatric research grants from the National Institutes of Health, and a research and teaching affiliate of the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine.

Cincinnati Children's is internationally recognised for improving child health and transforming delivery of care through fully integrated, globally recognised research, education and innovation.

Source: Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center
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