

NIAIC MEDICAL DEVICES ONE LINERS

ALL medical devices can fail but an increasing number of incidents which result in significant morbidity or mortality arise out of user/device interface problems or because of poor practices. The aim of this news sheet is to detail briefly some of the problems in an attempt to make users more aware of what can go wrong.....it is all too easy to take equipment for granted.

SCHWANN SONG

NIAIC has become aware through the MHRA of a case where a gelatine sponge was packed into a spinal surgical site, leading to neurological sequelae when the gel expanded on absorption of body fluids.

Only pack gelatine sponges loosely in body cavities to prevent expansion damaging surrounding tissue.

HAIR RAZING

There has been a report of burns to a patient following the use of an intense light source for hair removal without appropriate filters.

Always ensure that a filter has been fitted to the end of the applicator and is replaced as necessary in line with the manufacturer's instruction for use.

NEONATAL CARE

A fatality occurred in an NHS maternity unit when an intubated neonate was connected directly to an oxygen flow meter.

Medical and Nursing staff responsible for resuscitation of mothers and babies must be fully trained and completely familiar with the resuscitation equipment. See HN(NI)2002/09. In addition, all resuscitation equipment should be easily identifiable for either adult or neonatal/paediatric use and stored separately.

WATER SHOCKER!

There is evidence to suggest that bench top ultrasonicators, used as an important first step in the decontamination process, are not always being used appropriately.

The solution in the water bath should be changed at least when the water is visibly soiled or every four hours. The detergent solution must be compatible with the devices being decontaminated and used at the correct concentration. The unit must be maintained regularly to ensure that the power has not decreased.

EYE SORE?

There is the possibility of corneal burns resulting from inadequate irrigation in small incision phacoemulsification, leading to heat build up.

Always check your phaco machine is capable of adequate heat distribution before using this new technique.

HOT TIP

There has been a number of reports of infrared ear thermometers giving low temperature readings in children when incorrectly placed in the ear canal, leading to false reassurance and a delay in medical treatment.

If advising parents in the use of these thermometers, always ensure the user is familiar with the correct placement of the probe and the need to clean the probe. Advise parents to seek medical advice if there are health concerns, irrespective of the thermometer reading (Medical Device/Equipment Alert MDEA(NI)2003/03).

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