

ONE LINERS

ALL medical devices can fail but an increasing number of incidents that 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 these problems in an attempt to make users more aware of what can go wrong – it is all too easy to take equipment for granted.

Metabo-Lies

MHRA has received further reports of incorrect results from blood glucose meters. The patients were suffering from shock, dehydration, DKA, or severe anaemia.

Always ensure that you are familiar with the manufacturer's instructions for your meter (see MHRA leaflet on blood glucose meters for further guidance).

Drugs Bust!

Implantable infusion pumps are susceptible to damage from the use of inappropriate medicines or formulations, leading to pump failure and even drug overdose.

Only use medications, formulations and excipients that are approved by the implantable pump manufacturer.

Aerodynamics

MHRA has been informed of incidents where anaesthetic breathing systems have become trapped between the operating table and patient transfer trolley, leading to restricted gas flow with the potential for death or hypoxic brain damage.

Always ensure breathing circuits do not become trapped when transferring patients from the operating table (see MDA 205/062).

Cores for Concern!

MHRA received reports of a patient collapsing following the refilling of an implantable infusion pump with opiates which leaked from the pump's reservoir. The reservoir septum had been perforated repeatedly with standard injection needles, which compromised the septum.

When refilling implantable infusion pumps, always use a non coring needle of size recommended by the pump manufacturer.

Flow Blow!

MHRA continues to receive reports of injury, such as pneumothorax, caused by the administration of oxygen without adequate consideration for the passage of expired gas (e.g. connecting oxygen from a cylinder directly to an ET tube via a catheter mount and a white nozzle taken from an oxygen mask).

Always ensure that there is a free passage for expired gases where respiratory therapy devices are connected to endotracheal or tracheostomy tubes (see HN 2002(07)).

Gloves Off

MHRA has received a number of reports of synthetic gloves degrading and disintegrating when in contact with certain solvents, for example acetone, present in certain products such as spray-on wound dressings.

Ensure compatibility of gloves when using products containing solvents (see MDA/2005/043).