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Impact of Alarm Fatigue in Critical Care Nurses on Patient Outcomes

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Abstract

Background

Critical care units are equipped with extensive amounts of patient monitoring equipment that sound alarms to alert nursing staff to changes in the patient's condition. The constant beeping of alarms can result in a phenomenon known as alarm fatigue, when nursing staff becomes accustomed to the continuous sound of alarms and either tune it out or ignore it completely. This can result in poor patient outcomes. The purpose of this project is to propose techniques to decrease false alarms to reduce the overall number of alarms during a shift. This will lead to a reduction in the occurrence of alarm fatigue and ultimately improve patient outcomes.

Literature Review

Existing research shows methods to reduce the occurrence of false alarms include proper skin preparation and scheduled electrode replacements, customized alarm thresholds for patient needs, and vital sign trend analysis in place of alarms. Additional research is needed to investigate other ways to reduce or eliminate false alarms.

Methods

The study will be conducted on the ICU and CCU floors over six months. The study will be broken into three parts. The first part will survey the units' nursing staff about the current perception of alarms. The second part will involve implementing evidence-based practices to reduce the occurrence of false alarms. The third part will be to reissue the survey from part one after six months to evaluate nursing staff perceptions after interventions were implemented.

Evaluation

Evaluation will include comparing the pre-and post-intervention surveys to determine the effectiveness of the interventions on alarm fatigue.