

Safer Practice Notice

Date: September 13, 2018

Topic: Burn caused by using heated saline

Situation:

HPEI experienced a never event when a patient suffered a second degree burn from exposure to fluid taken out of a fluid/blanket warmer.

Background:

- The incident was immediately documented on the patients chart and the physician was made aware. The onsite wound care specialist was also immediately consulted.
- The manager met with the patient within days to apologize for the incident and to do further investigation.
- The nurse who performed the procedure had done so in the past using the exact same process without incident.
- The site has since changed its process to remove all fluid from warmers found on in-patient units. Exceptions made included those situations where there are evidence-based medical requirements for using warm fluids such as in the operating room.

Assessment:

- Saline and/or other liquids heated in a blanket warmer can get as hot as 150 degrees F.
- Blanket warmers are set at 150 F which is the manufacturers recommended setting for use with blankets. Even with a separate compartment for fluid it can be difficult to regulate the temperature to an appropriate level.
- Burn injuries to an individual can occur within seconds of being immersed in water that is approximately 120-130 degrees F.
- High temperatures are not recommended for storage of product (noted on packaging).
- Although foot soaks are sometimes ordered, best practice guidelines do not recommend their use, especially for patients with diabetes. Patients with foot issues should have their feet washed with soap (Gentle Rain) and water, and dried well.

Recommendation:

- No solutions, either in bottles or bags shall be stored in any model of blanket/fluid warmer that does not have the ability to set controls unless checks are put in place.
- NO bath/hygiene supplies shall be stored in blanket/fluid warmers.
- *ONLY* flannel blankets should be warmed in blanket warmers.
- Use warm tap water to soak any extremities.
- Hygiene supplies shall be kept in the specific hygiene supply warmer.
- When applicable, use only approved devices for warming fluids.

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