

Patient Safety Alert

Veterans Health Administration Warning System
Published by VA Central Office

February 13, 2004

- Item:** Proper Connectors for Sterilization of all Gastrointestinal Fiberoptic Endoscopes
- Specific Incident:** A VA medical center reports using an incorrect connector to link sterilizing solution to endoscopes during reprocessing (cleaning and sterilizing) procedures. A dual-port or “Y” connector designed to connect to endoscopes incorporating dual ports was connected to endoscopes with single ports. Under this condition an indeterminate amount of sterilizing solution may have been directed to the unconnected port, possibly leading to inadequate sterilization of the endoscope.
- Action:**
1. By March 5, 2004 conduct in-service training at all sites including VA medical centers and CBOCs for personnel tasked with reprocessing gastrointestinal fiberoptic endoscopes. The in-service training must address manufacturer instructions for proper reprocessing of specific models of gastrointestinal fiberoptic endoscopes for consistency with local work procedures. All third party (other than the endoscope manufacturer) tools and materials used for reprocessing must also be covered during the in-service training.
 2. Validate that appropriate reprocessing connectors are being utilized with each model of endoscope. Some manufacturers provide cognitive aids such as instruction placards and these must be available and intact where provided.
 3. Incorporate knowledge of proper handling and reprocessing of gastrointestinal fiberoptic endoscopes into JCAHO competency assessment requirements for individuals tasked with this assignment.
 4. Facility Patient Safety Managers will monitor the in-service training requirement and report completion to the VISN Patient Safety Officer. Reporting instructions for the VISN PSO will be provided in a separate communication from the office of the Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management.
 5. Scheduled procedures may continue while the above actions are undertaken.
- Addl. Information:** VA Emerging Pathogens Guidebook “Endoscope Cleaning and Processing”, available at (select articles from left side of page):
http://vaww.ceosh.med.va.gov/Guidebooks/GB8/Em_Path.htm
“Multi-Society Guideline for reprocessing Flexible Gastrointestinal Endoscopes,” available at: http://www.apic.org/pdf/SHEA_endoscopes.pdf
- [Note: Upon completion of the Root Cause Analysis further Alerts/Advisories on this subject may be provided where indicated.]
- Source:** Internal VA report.
- Contact:** Joe DeRosier at the National Center for Patient Safety at 734-930-5890 or Steven Wexler, VHA Chief Biomedical Engineer at 202-273-5881.