Alarm Fatigue

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PATIENT CARE ISSUE

- The phenomena of repeated false alarms over time causes nursing staff to become desensitized, responding less frequently and less punctually resulting in compromised patient care and safety.
- Characterized and caused by false positive and clinically insignificant alarms.
- Referred to as the “crying wolf” effect.
- The Joint Commission (TJC) estimates 85-99% of alarms are insignificant.

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Healthcare team interviewed: RN and RN team leader of Cardiac floor and RN on Pulmonary

Awareness of issue: RNs were aware of the issue and daily experience the effects of alarms.

Positive influences: team meeting awareness, soundproofing materials on walls, individual patient rooms, numerous hall monitors, and quick alarm response times.

REGISTERED NURSE INTERVIEW

- Healthcare team interviewed: RN and RN team leader of Cardiac floor and RN on Pulmonary
- Awareness of issue: RNs were aware of the issue and daily experience the effects of alarms.
- Knowledge of current policy: limited knowledge of hospital policy, no knowledge of EB
- Effect on Nursing: decreased sense of teamwork, increased frustration, heavy reliance on clinical judgment as opposed to monitors and responding to every alarm.

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EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE QUESTION

Question: For hospital nurses, do structural system changes as compared to individualized monitoring decrease alarm fatigue and increase patient safety?

- More high level research needs to be performed, particularly focusing on patient safety.

REFERENCES