Airway Rapid Response Team Contributes to Successful Airway Management

Study in December 2017 issue of The Joint Commission Journal on Quality and Patient Safety

(OAKBROOK TERRACE, Illinois, November 21, 2017) – Failure to properly manage a patient’s airway may result in death or brain injury. At the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, a new airway rapid response (ARR) team was created to bring personnel and equipment to the patient bedside for multidisciplinary airway assessment and rescue. Its success is the focus of a new study in the December 2017 issue of The Joint Commission Journal on Quality and Patient Safety.

The article, “An Airway Rapid Response System: Implementation and Utilization in a Large Academic Trauma Center,” by Joshua H. Atkins, MD, PhD, associate professor, Department of Anesthesiology and Critical Care, and Department of Otorhinolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery, Perelman School of Medicine, University of Pennsylvania, and co-authors, details how an ARR system was designed after a review revealed that ad hoc processes contributed to delays in assembling the surgical team and tracheostomy equipment after emergency intubation attempts had failed.

After the ARR system was implemented for 40 months, the study authors analyzed 117 events in which the ARR team was called and found that a definitive airway was secured in all patients for whom the team attempted airway management.

“Delays at critical moments may cost lives, and the system to deliver effective care the fastest is likely to be the safest,” note Michael DeVita, MD, and Kenneth M. Hillman, MB, in an accompanying editorial “Expanding the Scope of the Rapid Response System.” They add that rapid response systems bring “planned and focused team responses to a myriad of patient problems.”
The article and the editorial are available in open access. Also featured in the December 2017 issue:

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- “Using Lean Quality Improvement Tools to Increase Delivery of Evidence-Based Tobacco Use Treatment in Hospitalized Neurosurgical Patients”
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Note for editors
The article is “An Airway Rapid Response System: Implementation and Utilization in a Large Academic Trauma Center” by Joshua H. Atkins, MD, PhD; Christopher H. Rassekh, MD; Ara A. Chalian, MD; and Jing Zhao, MD. The article appears in The Joint Commission Journal on Quality and Patient Safety, volume 43, number 12 (December 2017), published by Elsevier.


The Joint Commission Journal on Quality and Patient Safety (JQPS) is a peer-reviewed journal providing health care professionals with innovative thinking, strategies and practices in improving quality and safety in health care. JQPS is the official journal of The Joint Commission and Joint Commission Resources, Inc. Original case studies, program or project reports, reports of new methodologies or the new application of methodologies, research studies, and commentaries on issues and practices are all considered.