

Good Practice Standards for Controlled Removal of Fluid from Chest Drains (Adults)

Context of Good Practice Resources

Published 01.12.2020

These resources, accessible as Good Practice Standards for controlled drainage of fluid from pleural effusions were developed through a multidisciplinary working group which included nurse representation from the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) and the Association of Respiratory Nurse Specialists (ARNS) in relation to the National Patient Safety Agency (NatPSA) Alert: 'Deterioration due to rapid offload of pleural effusion fluid from chest drains' (NatPSA/2020/008/NHSPS).

The NatPSA review of the National Reporting and Learning System (NRLS) identified 16 incidents where patients experienced acute and significant deterioration after uncontrolled or unmonitored drainage of a pleural effusion. The report identified variation in practice for rate and volume of fluid drainage, frequency of observations and the use of chest drain clamps.

The good practice resource was developed to provide best practice information and exemplar documentation for the care of patients with chest drains, in order to mitigate the risk of adult patient's deterioration and development of re-expansion pulmonary oedema.

Enhanced bedside observation will support staff to recognise and deal with complications and deliver safe and effective patient care. Clear communication and appropriate patient information will also empower patients to be fully informed about their chest drain care.

All relevant incidents related to adult patients older than 18 years. RPO as a result of pleural effusion drainage can affect children but is extremely rare. The ARNS Good Practice Standards are for adult patients; however the broad principles can apply to all age groups.

We acknowledge that these resources are related to the NatPSA alert in England. However, the document is likely to be accessed UK wide.

Copyright: Association of Respiratory Nurse Specialists (ARNS)

Author: Maria Parsonage RN, BSc, MSc, V300, Nurse Consultant in Respiratory Medicine and Pleural Disease Specialist

Stakeholder Engagement:

- Association of Respiratory Nurse Specialists
- Royal College of Nursing, Head of Nursing Practice
- National Patient Safety Response Advisory Panel [NHS England » Our National Patient Safety Alerts](#)

Review Date: 01.12.2021

This document should be reviewed annually and relevant research and National updates must be considered prior to endorsement.