

Investigating Medical-Device-Related “Burns”

ECRI Provides Key Steps and Tools to Assist Healthcare Facilities

Accidental skin injuries that develop in the healthcare setting are often initially mistaken for thermal or electrical burns caused by medical devices. These skin injuries can have significant consequences for patients including, severe disfigurement, skin pressure ulcers and lesions, and burns, which can be evident immediately or days after the procedure. Such injuries can have a variety of causes and only a thorough investigation will reveal the nature and origin of the related skin injury.

ECRI (www.ecri.org.uk), an independent, not for profit health services research organisation, offers guidance on investigating medical-device-related injuries in a recent issue of its monthly journal *Health Devices*. It features ECRI's step-by-step approach for determining the nature and origin of an accidental skin injury. ECRI recommends that healthcare facilities incorporate this information into their standard policies and procedures to help prevent future occurrences, facilitate an effective investigation process, and minimise future risk to patients.

ECRI outlines the following steps to be used in the investigation process: conduct a pre-procedure and post-procedure check of the skin, preserve and document evidence if a device-related injury is suspected, complete an incident report, and discuss the issue honestly, but cautiously with the patient and his/her family. Also included in this issue are a detailed questionnaire and a guide with a checklist of potential causes to assist the investigation team. Gathering data and investigating the cause of an accidental skin injury are key elements of a thorough investigation.

For information on purchasing single or bulk copies of the December 2005 issue of *Health Devices*, or for more information about membership, contact ECRI by telephone at 01707 831001, Option 1; by e-mail at info@ecri.org.uk or by fax at 01707 393138