

Manitoba Health, Healthy Living & Seniors (MHLS) supports reporting and learning from patient safety events. The focus of a patient safety review is to closely look at the health care system that surrounds and interacts with those giving and receiving care. The goal is to identify risks to patient safety and recommend the most effective ways to minimize risk and improve the delivery of healthcare.

Patient Safety Learning Advisory

Summary:

The patient was scheduled for elective day surgery under local sedation/anesthesia. A muscle blocking agent (Atracurium) was mistakenly given to the patient instead of a medication to help them relax (Midazolam).

The patient developed respiratory distress following administration of the muscle blocking agent. In the setting of the operating room, the complications of this were managed without difficulty.

After the surgery, the patient complained of mid-sternal chest pain and shortness of breath. This required treatment with oxygen and Nitroglycerin spray.

As a result, the patient required overnight admission to hospital for observation and monitoring. The patient was discharged home the following day.

Keywords:

Atracurium, Midazolam, sedation, monitoring

Device Name (if applicable):

Drug/Name/Fluid Name: (if applicable):

Midazolam, Atracurium

Type of Analysis: single event

Topic: Medication

Findings of the Review:

Both medications were stored on the top surface of a small and cluttered anesthesia cart. This made it more likely that an incorrect medication would be selected from the cart.

Recommendations for Improvement:

Standardize the supplies, medications and equipment on all anesthesia cart and medication trays in the Region.

Ensure that both the Program Director for Regional Anesthesia Equipment and the Program Director for Regional Pharmacy work together in determining what anesthetic drugs to place on the medication tray.

Other anesthetic equipment and supplies on the carts should also be standardized within the Regional Anesthesia Program. The end result should be every anesthesia cart in the region looks exactly the same and is stocked and maintained with exactly the same drugs, equipment and supplies.

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