

Patient Safety Moment

Objective: To start key meetings with a moment that is focused on the importance of Patient Safety and how the attention of AHS leaders is instrumental to reducing preventable harm.

The Importance of Reporting and Learning

Sharing Stories – A Sample Patient Safety Story: Reporting for Safer Clinical Products

Here is a sneak preview of a new Patient Safety Story that will be soon posted on Insite:

AHS staff are constantly vigilant about product safety to protect their patients.

So it came as a surprise when on/off rocker-style switches fell out of electrosurgical (ESU) pencils two different times at the Red Deer Regional Hospital Centre. On both occasions, OR registered nurses Cindy Peters and Lisa Fischer didn't hesitate to report the problems using the [Reporting and Learning System for Patient Safety \(RLS\)](http://insite.albertahealthservices.ca/1820.asp) [<http://insite.albertahealthservices.ca/1820.asp>], the provincial system for conveying adverse events, close calls and hazards.

The first incident happened in late April 2012, as the surgical team was preparing for a patient. "I'd never seen a switch fall out before," says Peters, an OR nurse since 1997. "We removed the pencil from the OR and I saved the paperwork. As soon as I could afterwards, I went and filled out the RLS."

One month later, another ESU pencil lost its switch. Only this time, surgery had already begun. "It was quite alarming," says Fischer, orthopedic/arthroplasty specialty nurse, who also completed the RLS.

"We removed the defective product right away to reduce any risk to the patient," says Fischer. The team also made sure to search the entire room for the lost switch, including drapes, garbage receptacles and inside the patient. Fortunately the patient was unharmed.

Something needed to be done to stop the potentially dangerous trend, says Joy Harris, Clinical Safety Coordinator with Product Quality, Safety, and Regulatory Compliance. "The fact that two staff reported it let us know that this wasn't a one-off occurrence, but a potential future risk to patient safety," she says.

Alerts about the defective product were raised immediately with both Health Canada and the manufacturer of the ESU pencils. Staff soon found out that their diligence with RLS made a real difference.

“The manufacturer looked into their manufacturing process, and the company even added an extra pull test to make sure the switches are secure,” says Peters. “When I found out, I was elated.”

Fischer uses the RLS regularly, and was also especially pleased to get such positive feedback. “We are advocates for our patients and our focus is on giving safe patient care. So I’m very happy with the change in production to ensure safety with this product.”

Everyone who fills out an RLS helps to improve patient safety, says Harris. And when RLS reporting is paired with a [Product Feedback Form](#), which conveys product information directly from the clinician to the Product Safety team, AHS can track and trend issues and take action on any potential product safety concerns.

“I hope users realize the importance of reporting because we can make a difference,” says Harris. “By using the RLS and filling out a Product Feedback Form, these two nurses identified a defective product that AHS needed to be aware of. We informed the manufacturer, and now we have a better, safer product.”

Story developed by Heather Ball and Sophia Christoforakis

The Product Quality, Safety, and Regulatory Compliance team serves as an ‘early warning system,’ tracking all input from across the province. This provides timely detection and mitigation of risks related to product concerns. The team has received about 1,100 forms so far this year. The team also tracks and manages product recalls, alerts and concerns arising outside of AHS.

Consider for a moment:

- How can leadership support staff and medical staff in identifying and reporting their patient safety issues?

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