To: Trust Decontamination Leads  
From: Graeme Kirkpatrick  
Date: 20 February 2018  
Re: Decontamination of Bronchoscopes

Risk of harm from inadvertent flushing of cleaning fluid during bronchoscope procedure

Dear Decontamination Lead

The Patient Safety Team at NHS Improvement has identified a potential safety issue during routine clinical review of serious incidents submitted to the Strategic Executive Information System (STEIS).

The incident concerns the inadvertent administration of bronchoscope cleaning fluid into a patient’s lungs and happened on an intensive care unit during a bronchoscopy and bronchoalveolar lavage procedure. The investigation report undertaken by the reporting organisation and shared with NHS Improvement revealed that:

Concentrated detergent was stored on the unit in bottles and usually mixed with sterile water to be used at the bedside for the post procedure clean. On this occasion, concentrated detergent was mixed into sterile sodium chloride 0.9% in error and 20mls of this fluid was instilled into a patient during bronchial lavage.

There was no protocol in place for bedside bronchoscopy, including the post procedure clean, and there was no formal training for clinical support workers assisting with the bronchoscopy procedures.

We appreciate that as a Decontamination Lead you may already have a locally developed Standard Operating Procedure for performing bronchoscopy and post procedure clean (PPC) at the bedside, supported by training and conformity to HTM 01-06. However, we would be grateful for your support in sharing the learning from this incident by reviewing what systems for bedside bronchoscopy procedures are in place in your organisation.

To reduce the risk of this happening again, consideration should be given to:

- Reviewing the chemicals used for PPC to prevent the need for dilution or decanting of detergents
- Reviewing the storage of chemicals in clinical areas to prevent them being used in error
- Ensuring systems are in place to confirm detergents for PPC are only prepared/taken to the bedside once the bronchoscopy is completed and following completion all patient interaction

Any queries regarding this correspondence should be directed through the Patient Safety Enquiries team at NHS Improvements via patientsafety.enquiries@nhs.net.

With thanks

Graeme Kirkpatrick  
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NHS Improvement