


Guideline Implementation: Energy-Generating Devices, Part 1—Electrosurgery 1.4 www.aornjournal.org/content/cme

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Purpose/Goal

To provide the learner with knowledge specific to implementing recommendations for the use of electrosurgery from the AORN “Guideline for safe use of energy-generating devices.”

Objectives

1. Discuss risks associated with the use of energy-generating devices in surgery.
2. Discuss ways to mitigate the risk for injury associated with the use of electrosurgical units (ESUs).
3. Describe precautions to take for a surgical patient with an implanted electronic device.
4. Identify items that should be documented related to energy-generating device use.

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Sheryl P. Eder, MSN, RN, CNOR, CRCST, has no declared affiliation that could be perceived as posing a potential conflict of interest in the publication of this article.

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ABSTRACT

Energy-generating devices are standard equipment in the surgical suite, with electrosurgical units being the most common type of electrical device used in the OR. Prevention of injuries to patients and personnel related to the use of energy-generating devices is a key component of the perioperative nurse's role. The AORN "Guideline for safe use of energy-generating devices" provides guidance on the use and maintenance of devices that deliver energy in the forms of radiofrequency waves, ultrasound waves, or lasers. This article focuses on key points of the guideline, which address precautions specific to electrosurgical units, patients with implanted electronic devices, and minimally invasive surgery, and documentation of the use of energy-generating devices. Perioperative RNs should review the complete guideline for additional information and for guidance when writing and updating policies and procedures. *AORN J* 105 (March 2017) 300-310. © AORN, Inc, 2017. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.aorn.2017.01.004>

Key words: *electrosurgery, electrocautery, energy-generating devices, lasers, patient safety.*

Although technological advances have improved the safety of energy-generating devices used in surgery, patient and personnel injuries from the improper use of these devices continue to be a concern. Energy-generating equipment, such as electrosurgical units (ESUs), lasers, and argon beam coagulators used for tissue dissection and coagulation, is beneficial in the surgical suite but may also be associated with unintended injury if used incorrectly.¹ Thermal injury may result from direct application, insulation failure, unintended discharge of electrical or laser energy, or antenna coupling (eg, inadvertent transfer of monopolar current through conductive materials).^{1,2} Injuries from unintended contact with energy used for surgery may result in delayed wound healing, prolonged hospitalization, permanent disability, or even death.¹

This topic is especially important to patients and health care practitioners because of the large number of energy-generating devices used in the OR. Each device has unique uses and precautions that perioperative team members should be aware of so they may ensure safe use and proper care of the equipment. In addition, because a patient undergoing an operative or other invasive procedure under anesthesia often has no ability to protect himself or herself from harm, the perioperative nurse's role in the planning, coordination, safe delivery, and evaluation of nursing care for the patient includes protecting the patient from the adverse effects of improper use of energy-generating devices.³

The new AORN "Guideline for safe use of energy-generating devices," published in September 2016, combines the previous

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