
CELLPHONE RISK & OTHER COMMUNICATION DEVICES

Overview

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline:

- The potential risk to patients/clients/residents from the use of cellphones or other communications devices in the vicinity of sensitive clinical equipment.
 - How to minimise that risk.
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Scope

This policy applies to all employees of ADHB and independent practitioners contracted to provide services.

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Associated Documents

Associated Documents

Other documents associated with this policy are as follows.

Type	Document Titles
Board Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clinical Product & Device Management
Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Guide to the Safe Use of Electricity in Patient Care. AS/NZS 2500 1995 Australia and New Zealand's Standards.• Approval and Test Specifications Medical Electrical Equipment Electromagnetic Compatibility. AS/NZS 3200.1.2:1995
Journal Articles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Performance Degradation of Electronic Medical Devices Due to Electromagnetic Interference. <i>Silbeberg (1993) Compliance Engineering Fall 1993.</i>• Mobile Telephones Interfere with Medical Electrical Equipment. <i>Clifford (1994) Australian Physical and Engineering Sciences in Medicine 1994 V.117.</i>• Cellular Telephones and Radio Transmitters Interfere with Clinical Equipment. <i>Health Devices 1993 vol 22 No 39, Pages 416 418.</i>• Xth World Symposium on Cardiac Pacing and Electrophysiology. <i>October 1995 Abstracts Nos 70. 167, 185.</i>
Alerts Bulletin	Electromagnetic Interferences with Medical Devices ECRI Health Devices. <i>Alerts Bulletin August 1993.</i>

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Cellphone Risk & Other Communication Devices

Background

It is known that digital cell phone technology can cause electromagnetic interference with some sensitive equipment.

Likewise, other communications devices such as “walkie-talkies” and cordless phones can emit relatively powerful fields of electromagnetic interference.

Potential Risk

Although the overall risk associated with these devices is minimal because the probability of interference causing improper equipment operation is low should it occur the outcome could be life threatening.

Such interference is likely in three primary situations identified below.

Risk Area	Minimised by
Theatre and intensive care units	the constant one-on-one monitoring which occurs in these areas
Monitoring equipment (all areas)	the fact that such equipment will clearly display any interference on its screen
Infusion pumps (wards)	good ward practices and patient monitoring

Responsibility

Employees using cellphones and cordless phones are responsible for using them in a sensible manner taking into account the potential risks involved.

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Cellphone Risk & Other Communication Devices, Continued

Operational Parameters

The '2 metre' rule

Cellphones or other communications devices are not to be placed within less than 2 metres of sensitive clinical equipment (even when in standby mode).

Intensive Care Areas

Given the nature of these areas clinical staff may make a decision to restrict the use of cellphones completely.

Note: Be aware that such devices have been shown to interfere with pacemaker operation when used within 15 centimetres of the pacemaker.

New Equipment Purchase

When purchasing new clinical equipment assurances are to be sought from the manufacturer that, wherever possible, the equipment is immune to electromagnetic interference and complies with *AS/NZS 3200.1.2:1995*.

Advice to Non- Employees

Non-employees (i.e. patients/clients/residents, visitors, etc.) will be advised of the potential risks of using communications devices close to clinical equipment.

Signage

Appropriate signs to hang above beds of patients with infusion pumps or at entrances to intensive care areas or wards are to be available.
