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Title: INSTITUTIONAL RISK MANAGEMENT PROGRAM TO ADDRESS NATURAL RUBBER LATEX CONCERNS

Purpose/Rationale:

An opportunity exists to establish an institutional risk management program to address sensitivity to natural rubber latex (NRL). This issue is an ongoing concern for healthcare providers: exposure of NRL-sensitive people can produce adverse reactions ranging from dermatitis to anaphylaxis. Effecting a small but significant percentage of both patients and professionals, there is an increasing awareness of the risk of adverse reactions.

Objective:

A comprehensive risk management program is needed for healthcare institutions. With more than 300 different types of medical products containing ANRL, governmental requirements are being established for the suppliers. Other regulatory agencies, such as NIOSH in the United States, have started to address this issue from an occupational perspective.

Simple but effective procedures can be put in place to limit exposure and risk. First, develop a broad-based understanding of the main concerns regarding NRL-sensitivity: types of latex reactions, the source of these reactions (ingredients contained inside NRL) and the characteristics of populations at greatest risk. Next, collect written statements from vendors of all medical supplies regarding the presence of NRL and understand what their statements mean. Develop a patient/professional assessment procedure along with a system to communicate that information. Finally, develop alternate latex treatment strategies focusing on specialized treatment areas and equipment for people with known latex sensitivities.

Outcomes:

Implementation of a comprehensive program to address NRL-sensitivity in both patients and professionals will result in improved treatment modalities and reduce the risk of adverse reactions.