

Patient Safety Alert

File Number: 18/19-02
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PRE-OPERATIVE PREGNANCY TESTING

Conducting an invasive gynecologic procedure to identify a cause of infertility resulted in accidental termination of a patient's pregnancy that had previously been undetected. Health providers are responsible for ruling out the possibility of pregnancy in patients of child bearing age prior to the patient undergoing gynecologic procedures.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Ministry of Health recommends the Saskatchewan Health Authority and health care organizations:

- **Develop policy and / or standard work requiring pre-operative pregnancy testing for gynecological surgical patients of child bearing age.**

The policy should include:

- Confirmation that if a pregnancy test result is positive or not available, the procedure does not proceed "full stop";
- An addition to the surgical checklist to confirm that critical pre-operative tests (including pregnancy test for gynecologic patients) have been obtained and results were read by the physician prior to proceeding; and
- Identification of notable exceptions to when a pregnancy test is not required prior to gynecologic surgery such as hysterectomy or for post-menopausal women.

Background of the Critical Incident

A patient consented to a diagnostic hysteroscopy/laparoscopy following a prolonged period of infertility. The patient had stated to her surgeon that she had a normal menstrual period the previous month. A pre-operative pregnancy test was ordered on the surgical booking form (and as such should have been performed prior to the surgery); however, it was missed in the pre-operative work-up and a requisition for the urine sample was not prepared. The surgeon began the procedure as planned and then needed to curette as tissue was present in the uterus. Post-operatively, a urine sample sent to the lab revealed a

positive pregnancy test; however, the pregnancy was no longer viable following the completion of the procedure.

Analysis

- There was no expectation of a viable pregnancy in the patient given the reason for the gynecologic procedure was to explore probable causes of the patient's extensive history of infertility. Proceeding with the diagnostic hysteroscopy/laparoscopy despite the absence of pregnancy test results then led to accidental termination of a wanted pregnancy.

Summary of Contributory Factors

- The surgical booking form contains a total of 50 boxes on the form, one of which houses 22 individual check boxes, with the tests required typically marked with an "X". The font is 8 point or smaller.
- A urine test (which would have included pregnancy testing) was requested on the surgical booking form; however, it is likely that the "X" was not seen and therefore a requisition for the urine sample was not prepared.
- The surgical booking form was faxed to Day Surgery on the day of the patient's appointment. The print on the page was somewhat distorted by the scan/fax process and again this lack of clarity contributed to the procedure going forward without the urinalysis having been completed.

Patient safety alerts may be issued by the Ministry of Health following the review of at least one critical incident reported to the Ministry. A critical incident is defined as a serious adverse health event including, but not limited to, the actual or potential loss of life, limb or function related to a health service or a program operated by the Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA), the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency or a health care organization.

The purpose of a patient safety alert is to recommend actions that will improve the safety of patients who may be cared for under similar circumstances. Recommendations are intended to support the development of best practices and to act as a framework for improvement and can be adapted to fit the needs of the health service organization. When possible, policies or initiatives that have been developed by the SHA or the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency will be shared, to support adoption of policies or actions.

Patient Safety Alerts online: <https://www.ehealthsask.ca/services/resources/Pages/Patient-Safety.aspx>