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A survey of criteria utilized by respiratory therapists to document pulmonary secretion quantity

Introduction or Background: Healthcare practitioners, mainly nurses and respiratory therapists, care for thousands of intubated and trached, mechanically ventilated patients each year. Part of the care of a mechanically ventilated patient is frequent suctioning of the trachea to remove secretions. Currently, there is no criterion for documenting the quantity of pulmonary secretions recovered from suctioning a mechanically ventilated patient. The purpose of this research survey is to determine criteria for documenting the quantity of pulmonary secretions retrieved. Methods: A survey has been sent via e-mail to thirteen respiratory therapy managers, with a request to disperse the survey to their employees- 576 employees. Hard copies of the survey were available upon request. The survey asks the participants to state criteria used to define commonly used terms: scant, small, moderate, large and copious when documenting the amount of pulmonary secretions collected after suctioning a trached or intubated patient for one setting. The data will be gathered and compiled into a spread sheet to determine criteria to standardize documentation of the quantity of pulmonary secretions. Data were analyzed to determine the consistency with a set of definitions devised by University based respiratory therapists. By the nature of the questionnaire there were “free text” responses. Each response was compared with the “definition”. If the respondent definition was not consistent with the definition the response was classified as non-consistent “nc”. If the respondent was consistent with the definition it was classified as consistent “c”.