

WELSH HEALTH CIRCULAR



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Issue Date: 14 September 2020

STATUS: ACTION

CATEGORY: POLICY

Title: POLICY ON SINGLE-USE AND REUSABLE LARYNGOSCOPES

Date of Expiry/Review: 14 September 2021

For Action by:

Board level & operational level decontamination leads – for transmission to all relevant colleagues including for example, theatre staff and unscheduled care staff
Medical Directors
Nurse executive Directors
Directors of Therapies & Healthcare Science
NWSSP-Specialist Estates Services

Action required timescale:

Immediate with full compliance within 1 year of the issue of this guidance

For information:

All Wales Decontamination & Sterilisation Advisory Group
Health Boards/Trusts –
Chief Executives
Medical Directors
Nurse executive Directors
Public Health Wales
Health education & Improvement

Sender & HSSG Welsh Government contact:

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Enclosure(s):

None

Introduction

Laryngoscopes are medical devices used in the management and intubation of patients' airways. Because of their ergonomic design, associated grip needs for the user, and the blade mount, laryngoscope handles can be easily contaminated when used and can also be very difficult to clean.

To ensure patient safety, the **safest** approach is to purchase laryngoscopes as single-use items to be disposed of after being used on individual patients during a single episode of care (not to be reprocessed and used again even on the same patient).

However, if local policy is to use reusable laryngoscopes, it is essential that they are decontaminated and sterilised in accordance with the manufacturer instructions using automated/validated methodologies and by accredited sterile service departments.

Background

Concerns about reusable laryngoscopes have been raised from time to time over the years. Back in 2011, the Medicines & Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) received a Coroner's report of an inquest that found a patient's death was caused by a failure to decontaminate a laryngoscope handle appropriately between each patient use.

A consequent Medical Device Alert (MDA/2011/0096) recommended that all organisations review, and update, local procedures to ensure that reusable laryngoscope handles are safe for use on subsequent patients. Since then, organisations have taken a number of measures to minimise the risk of a similar occurrence. Continued use of reusable handles (and blades) has, however, not been without its challenges in respect of decontamination. A number of organisations have therefore taken the safest step by moving to single-use laryngoscopes only.

Action

Organisations must ensure such devices (handles and blades) are **either**

- single use application **or**
- designed for re-usable applications with systems in place to ensure they are decontaminated appropriately between each patient use.

They must have clear risk management processes in place to ensure that only one of the two options above is implemented by all users across its area and will be required to confirm full compliance to the all Wales Decontamination & Sterilisation Advisory Group by 1 September 2021.

If the local policy is to utilise single-use laryngoscopes (handles and blades), they must be used once only and then disposed of.

Where reusable devices continue to be used, strategies to address contamination of handles must provide the highest level of decontamination possible between each patient. Such reprocessing must use automated washer disinfectors and steam sterilisation in compliance with manufacturer's instructions within accredited sterile service departments. These devices need to be maintained in good condition through, for example, service contracts with manufacturers and replaced where necessary. They should be packaged in an appropriate manner and subsequently stored in a way that would prevent recontamination.

The use of wipes, sheaths (or compatible cover) or chemical disinfection are not adequate methods for decontamination between patients. Where a sheath is used, it must be single use and discarded at the end of the clinical procedure.

As technology advances, it is becoming increasingly common to use video-laryngoscopes and these can be single use or re-usable devices (if designed for such a purpose). Where re-usable options are chosen, they must be decontaminated in accordance with the manufacturer instructions using automated and validated systems.

Such innovative devices are often purchased through informal channels. However, they should not be purchased or brought into the organisation on loan without due consideration to appropriate decontamination procedures. Systems should be in place to ensure consultation, prior to purchase, with relevant medical devices groups within the organisation. Such groups will include representatives trained on the principles of decontamination and infection control. Organisations can also seek advice from NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership – Specialist Estates Services.

Where patient safety priorities deem that the single use is the preferred option, consideration must be in place to establish all waste stream recycling options available. This will help reduce the environmental impact of the policy.