

Data and fine tuning may be the keys to managing alarm overload

Connected care technologies like patient monitor devices provide valuable data that help clinicians care for their patients. Their ubiquitousness, however, has led to alarm fatigue, which can affect quality of care and strain resources. With its deep understanding of medical monitoring devices, Philips can help healthcare organizations create an alarm system management program aimed at deterring alarm fatigue.

“Being able to refine how patient monitoring devices work and help clinicians detect conditions where clinicians need to act is an important thing that has bubbled to the top over the last few years,” said Philips CMO Joseph Frassica, MD. Recently, he noted, the Joint Commission has taken interest, raising awareness of the issue of alarm fatigue and making alarm management one of its National Patient Safety Goals.

“In response, healthcare organizations are creating alarm system management programs. Many start with clinical best practices such as making sure electrodes are properly applied to patients,” said Frassica. But what is critical is tuning your devices to meet the specific needs of the patient. “If you take a monitor that is tuned for critically ill patients in the ICU and you put it on a patient that’s not too

sick, it’s going to make a lot of noise,” he said.

The key to appropriately tuning monitoring devices to meet the needs of specific patients is data. “We feel strongly that data is important to make the right decisions and fine tune your systems so they perform best in your setting,” Frassica said.

Philips’ approach is to gather data and drill down. “One of the keys to what we do is go in and help with modeling,” said Frassica, working with clinicians to understand the potential impact of changing the default settings of alarm parameters. “In order to do that effectively, you have to know deeply how these measurements are done and what the behavior of the device is that triggers the alarm.” Philips’ alarm management consulting team, he said, has that knowledge.

Using proven methodologies, Philips provides clinical consultative services that include data analytics to assess alarm levels and support quiet, healing environments. Custom strategies are based on shadowing and staff interviews, and include support from implementation and change management, as well as results monitoring.

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