

On the clinical front

• **Unnecessary:** Episiotomies offer no benefit during childbirth and may even cause harm.
— JAMA

• **Fasting flap:** Having children fast before surgery is not recommended.
— The Cochrane library

• **Information gap?** About 70 percent of nurses graduated before 1990. Though medical information and standards are always changing, 67 percent of nurses in a survey said they usually only used colleagues for questions about their practice, 58 percent never read research reports and 82 percent had never used the hospital library.
— HRSA, AJN



WHAT EVERY NURSE NEEDS to KNOW™

Critical news briefly: 4Q 2005

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On the legal front

• **Workplace harassment:** The Supreme Court recently strengthened the concept of "constructive discharge," which means that if an employee feels so threatened or harassed in a workplace that he or she is compelled to quit, the voluntary quitting is actually the fault of the employer. The employee still must show that an official act occurred to create a bad environment.
— The Advocate (Kentucky Academy of Trial Attorneys)

• **Battery:** If a patient gives consent and then later withdraws it, even in mid-procedure, a nurse may open himself to a battery claim if he proceeds over patient's objections. Exception: Matter of life and death.
— Legal Eagle Eye Newsletter



Pain patches can be dangerous: Watch for errors

By Margaret S. Wacker, RN

• Pain medication patches are being used more frequently, especially after JACHO has recently required more aggressive attention to, and treatment of, patients' complaints of pain. The downside of this increased use is that some doctors are unfamiliar with prescribing the patches and the strong medications they contain, there are problems with a lack of monitoring once the patches are in place, and patients often are not given clear instructions in how to use them.

• Scopolamine patches are often used for seasickness, nitroglycerin patches for angina, and nicotine patches for smoking cessation. Fentanyl is a pain medicine about 80 times stronger than morphine.

• Examples of life threatening events with fentanyl (Duragesic) pain relief patches:

■ **Improper prescribing:** An opiate-naïve 86-year-old woman was administered a 25 microgram Duragesic patch. Her pharmacist soon found her cyanotic and barely responsive — an overdose.

■ **Failure to monitor:** A 32-year-old post cesarean section woman was prescribed a 100 microgram Duragesic patch for pain. She coded in her room that evening. Her obstetrician had asked another physician how to manage pain when a patient was allergic to morphine.

The colleague recommended fentanyl but never thought it would be prescribed in the form of a high dose patch.

■ **Improper patient directions:** An elderly patient with a patch phoned to complain about feeling dizzy and sleepy. Her doctor told her to cut the patch in half (which would release a huge and dangerous amount of medicine — the opposite of what the doctor wanted). Her daughter intervened. A patient receiving a 50 microgram Duragesic patch asked for a heating pad for muscle pain. The nurse failed to warn her about placing the heating pad over the patch. The heat intensified the release of the fentanyl from the depot and increased her continuous dose.

• Fentanyl patches are constructed differently from other transdermal delivery systems. These patches require eight to ten hours for the skin under the drug reservoir to create the drug depot. Once formed, fentanyl is released from the depot at a constant rate for 72 hours. Respiratory depression is a complex emergency with a Duragesic patch. The reversal agent, usually naloxone, has an effect for 45-60 minutes. Therefore the patient will require intravenous naloxone and intensive care monitoring until the drug is eliminated from the depot.



• More details at
www.duragesic.com or
www.cancerpainrelief.com.

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"The proper function of man is to live, not to exist. I shall not waste my days in trying to prolong them. I shall use my time."
— Jack London

"Wheresoever you go, go with all your heart."
— Confucius

"Few enterprises of great labor or hazard would be undertaken if we had not the power of magnifying the advantages we expect from them."
— Samuel Johnson

"Be thou the rainbow in the storms of life. The evening beam that smiles the clouds away, and tints tomorrow with prophetic ray."
— Lord Byron

"Don't compromise yourself. You are all you've got."
— Janis Joplin

"Always bear in mind that your own resolution to success is more important than any other one thing."
— Abraham Lincoln