

SBAR for Policy Change: Alcohol as the Primary Antiseptic

Situation:

To enhance patient safety and reduce the risk of skin reactions, we are updating our antiseptic protocol for cannulation site preparation. Effective **June 30th, 70% Isopropyl Alcohol** will replace **Chlorhexidine** as the **primary antiseptic** for patients without contraindications.

Background:

Chlorhexidine, though widely used, has been associated with **increased reports of skin irritation and allergic reactions** in our patient population. To **align with current industry standards** and promote evidence-based practice, we are transitioning to **70% Isopropyl Alcohol**, which has been shown to be both **clinically effective and better tolerated**.

Assessment:

Alcohol is a highly effective antiseptic with broad-spectrum antimicrobial action, rapid evaporation, and minimal skin sensitization risk.

- The revised **Site Preparation for Cannulation** policy outlines a **60-second circular scrub using 70% Isopropyl Alcohol**, with **cannulation occurring while the site remains wet**, to optimize antiseptic efficacy.
- **Betadine Swabsticks** will be used as the **alternative for patients allergic to alcohol** (allow to dry for 3–5 minutes).
- **Chlorhexidine** will be reserved only for patients allergic to both alcohol and Betadine and will require formulary exception.

Recommendation:

- **Implement the new antiseptic protocol by June 30th.**
- Ensure **all clinical staff have reviewed the training video and supporting materials** on the updated **Site Preparation for Cannulation** policy.
- Reinforce proper technique: **60-second circular rub with 70% alcohol, cannulate while wet.**
- Monitor and document any adverse reactions.
- Update all related signage, and patient education materials.