

Top 10 Health Technology Hazards for 2011

Smarter choices, safer patients. That's the motto that appears on the front cover of every issue of ECRI Institute's Health Devices. The product choices that affect patient safety cover a broad swath. Device selection decisions play a part, but just as critical are choices about what device settings are used, how system interfaces are tested, which ancillary technologies are employed, and when maintenance is performed. Our Top 10 Health Technology Hazards list for 2011 encompasses all aspects of device management and use--and poor choices can adversely affect patient care. That's why well focused patient safety initiatives are such a crucial component of any healthcare facility's technology management program.

With that in mind, we developed our annual list of the top 10 health technology hazards to be a tool that healthcare facilities can use to prioritize their patient safety efforts. Our list presents the potential sources of danger that we believe warrant the greatest attention to increase awareness and prevent risks for the coming year. Some of the topics reflect frequently reported problems, while others are less common. But all address problems that can be prevented, or at least reduced--if effective risk-mitigation strategies are employed.

The top five hazards on ECRI Institute's 2011 list are:

1. Radiation overdose and other dose errors during radiation therapy
2. Alarm hazards
3. Cross-contamination from flexible endoscopes
4. The high radiation dose of CT scans
5. Data loss, system incompatibilities, and other health IT complications

Note that our list reflects our judgment about which risks should receive priority now, a judgment that is based on our review of recent recalls and other actions we've examined, our analysis of information found in the literature and in the medical device problem reporting databases of ECRI Institute and other organizations, and our experience in investigating and consulting on device-related incidents. Some topics remain from last year's list, and some are new.

How Can We Help You?

Whether you have questions about the final rule or want to learn more about ECRI Institute PSO and/or support for other PSOs, we would be happy to hear from you. Please contact ECRI Institute at psa@ecri.org or call (610) 825-6000, ext. 5558.