

Stimulation: How's your Technique

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Background: Sternal rub has been shown to cause marked bruising and skin breakdown and should be used with extreme caution. (1) Similarly, supra orbital ridge pressure can cause harm to patients if the patient moves during the examination. (2) The trapezius pinch appears to be the safest technique for healthcare workers to use.

Aim: To compare knowledge and practice of nurses working in the neurosciences versus non neurosciences areas in regards to painful stimulation administered during the Glasgow Coma Scale assessment.

Method: 20 nurses - 10 working in the neuroscience specialty and 10 working in other clinical areas of the hospital were given a survey to complete. Questions asked were:

1. What types of painful stimuli do you use as part of the GCS assessment?
2. Can you list any reasons to avoid certain stimuli (list given)?
3. Do you know the difference between central and peripheral painful stimuli?
4. Do you feel that St Vincent's policy and procedure on neurological assessment provides clear guidance of best techniques to use?

Results: Results have been collated and will be summarised in table/graph format if abstract is accepted.

Discussion: When conducting the GCS assessment, a high percentage of both neuroscience nurses and non neuroscience nurses are still using techniques of painful stimulation that are not in line with current literature. Nurses need to be educated about the difference between central and peripheral painful stimulation and its use in the GCS. It is clear that there needs to be more education and clearer guidelines surrounding this in all areas of the hospital.

References

1. Fairley, D & Cosgrove, J 1999, "Glasgow coma scale: improving nursing practice through clinical effectiveness", *Nurs Crit Care*, Vol.4, no.6, p.276-281.
2. Woodward, S & Mestecky, AM 2011, *Neuroscience Nursing: evidence based practice*, Wiley Blackwell, England. Objectives: To gain an insight into the techniques being used by nurses when conducting the GCS and if they are in line with current research findings.