



Issue date 14 August 2023
Distributed to: Chief Executives Directors of Clinical Governance Director, Regulation and Compliance Unit
Action required by: Chief Executives Directors of Clinical Governance
We recommend you also inform: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Directors, Managers & Staff of:• Radiology Networks• Radiology Heads of Departments / Units• Angiogram suites• Nurse/Midwifery Unit Managers• Nursing/Midwifery Staff• Directors of Nursing and Midwifery• Directors Allied Health• Relevant Allied Health staff• Managers of Linen Services
Expert Reference Group Content reviewed by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ HealthShare NSW▪ Clinical Excellence Commission Consultation: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Agency Clinical Innovation
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Review date February 2024

UPDATED: Use of linen in radiological procedures – potential artefact

What is updated in this Safety Information from 001/20?

Updated actions and confirmation of timeframes for completion of the transition from blue blankets.

Background

Blue Blankets

Concerns were raised to HealthShare NSW regarding the use of blue synthetic blankets during x-ray procedures, including mobile x-ray, general x-ray, fluoroscopy and angiography as they may result in artefacts presenting in the image. These artefacts may be interpreted as pathology and may impact patient clinical assessment and outcomes. The use of any blankets and bed linen during imaging may result in artefact in images. However, the previously used white blankets had a noticeable 'cross hatched' pattern which allowed clinicians to detect the presence of the blanket while reviewing and reporting on images. The blue blankets do not have any distinguishing features to alert to their presence.

Linen Radio Frequency Identification Device (RFID) tags

It has been identified that the RFID tags in some patient gowns, pillow cases, and sheets also have the potential to result in artefact during imaging.

Testing and Assessment

Testing was undertaken to investigate the use of blue synthetic blankets during radiological procedures compared to the use of white cotton blankets. The testing confirmed that the blue blanket was more likely to present a non-uniform image, particularly at the point where blanket fold lines appeared. This makes it difficult to delineate the synthetic blue blanket artefact from the underlying patient pathology. The level of artefact increased with multiple layers or folds in the blanket. This has the potential to result in clinical errors and compromised patient outcomes.

Actions

- Blue synthetic blankets will be removed as an order item for all imaging departments across NSW Health. White cotton blankets have been offered as an alternative interim solution to be used in imaging departments as required.
- Blue synthetic blankets have been removed from Illawarra, Lismore, Orange, Tamworth and Wagga Wagga Linen Services. Newcastle and Parramatta Linen Services are planned for transition by February 2024
- As blue synthetic blankets are used and returned to HealthShare NSW Linen Services from radiology departments, these will be replaced with white cotton blankets through the normal ordering processes via Linenweb

Due to the increased risk of artefacts associated with imaging, linen supplies in radiology departments were prioritised for transition

Made obsolete July 2025: Advice has been incorporated into Fetal heart Rate Monitoring GL2025_004

FOR NSW HEALTH STAFF ONLY

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Clinical Recommendations

- Where possible, remove or minimise linen from the imaging field during any radiological procedure, including mobile x-ray, general x-ray, fluoroscopy and angiography
- If blankets or covers are required, do not use blue blankets and ensure minimal folds, bunching or creasing of the covering to reduce artefact

Contact

For any questions regarding this change, contact: Customer Service Team, Linen Services on 1300 477 546 or HSNSW-LinenOrders@health.nsw.gov.au

Alternatively contact: Deborah O'Toole, Manager, Linen Customer Relationships M: 0402 251 333 deborah.otoole@health.nsw.gov.au

Suggested actions for the Local Health Districts/Networks

1. Distribute this Safety Information to all relevant areas for information and action
2. Include this Safety Information in relevant handovers and safety huddles
3. Ensure a system is in place to document actions taken