

Evergreen Hospital NICU Strives to Become DEHP- and PVC-free

EVERGREEN HOSPITAL MEDICAL CENTER CHILDREN'S SERVICES • KIRKLAND, WASHINGTON

Evergreen Hospital Medical Center was founded in 1972 in Kirkland, Washington to provide health care services to the Eastside community. The Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) serves high-risk infants in the East Puget Sound region. In 2004, Evergreen provided care for 4,412 births. The Hospital also provided care for over 18,000 adult and pediatric admissions.

A nurse in the Evergreen PEDS first raised concerns regarding di-2-ethylhexyl-phthalate (DEHP)/polyvinyl chloride (PVC) in early 2002 and brought the concerns to the attention of Eney Gaines Wrinkle, Equipment Material Coordinator for Women's and Children's Services. Ms. Gaines Wrinkle went to work to research the issue. She quickly learned of the patient safety issues and the environmental and human health consequences of DEHP and PVC and sought to find replacement products to use in her NICU.

In August 2002, she subsequently attended an Association for Healthcare Resource and Materials Management (AHRMM) meeting, where Health Care Without Harm presented on DEHP/PVC. She discovered at that session that only two attendees, herself being one, were aware of the DEHP issue and were actively moving to DEHP-/PVC-free alternatives. Ms. Gaines Wrinkle returned to Evergreen Hospital even more committed to this issue and began to find alternatives, spearheading the nursery's efforts to phase out DEHP/PVC.

Ms. Gaines Wrinkle began replacing medical devices containing DEHP as soon as she was able to locate preferable alternative products from manufacturers. At times, the search for alternatives was not easy. She found that products were infrequently labeled and it was a time consuming process to contact each vendor or manufacturer to determine whether their products were DEHP- or PVC-free.

Over the past three years in Evergreen's NICU, most of the DEHP-containing products have been replaced. Ms. Gaines Wrinkle has found that manufacturers are gradually becoming more responsive to queries about the DEHP content of products. In 2004, Physicians for Social Responsibility assisted her in conducting an audit of the NICU, finding that most DEHP products had been replaced. She still must deal, however, with a small list of products where manufacturers have been unable to provide her with DEHP- or PVC-free alternatives.

The Evergreen NICU has only a few remaining devices containing DEHP. Ms. Gaines Wrinkle continues to search for alternatives, moving to DEHP-free products whenever possible.

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