



# VITALS

A Weekly Safety Newsletter For Medical Transport Professionals

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## Recalls & Alerts (Again)

The Non-invasive Blood Pressure (NIBP) modules of 445 *LifePak 15 Monitor/Defibrillators* were found to be overly sensitive to sudden changes in cuff pressure. The issue has been resolved in that all customer units have been upgraded. However, the October 30, 2009 letter from PhysioControl to its customers indicated that "This issue did not pose any risk to patients." Of course this problem did not affect the delivery of defibrillation therapy. Patients could be at risk if faulty readings were used to make clinical decisions. This reinforces the need to evaluate the entire patient and not develop tunnel vision.



The FDA Patient Safety News for November, 2009 advises that *Philips Lifeline emergency buttons worn around the neck* may pose a choking hazard if the cord becomes entangled. Three deaths have occurred. The Lifeline pendants are designed not to break away so that it won't fall off the person's body. There are help-button devices that can be worn like wrist watches. Access to this type of button may be limited by stroke or if an arm becomes trapped. Users should consult with their healthcare provider to determine which is most appropriate.

*Hospira, Inc. and Abbott Nutrition* have sent the FDA 122 reports of sparking, charring and fires from *power cords used with their devices*. Apparently, the power cord's prongs may crack or fail at the inside of the plug. The FDA recommends that the users of all medical devices in healthcare facilities, homes or transport vehicles closely monitor the wear and tear on power cords. This is especially true in oxygen rich environments where sparking or arcing may trigger a fire.

The FDA is investigating energy levels in *external biphasic defibrillators with shocks  $\leq 200J$* . Since 2006, the FDA has received reports of 14 events in which a 200 J biphasic defibrillator shock was ineffective in cardioverting/defibrillating a patient, whereas a subsequent shock from a different 360 J biphasic defibrillator resulted in immediate cardioversion/defibrillation. There is apparently no need to change current clinical practice. The FDA encourages providers to follow the American Heart Association guidelines and manufacturers' instructions.

## Poster Pointers Call for Help!

Medical Transportation providers are four times more likely to retire due to musculoskeletal, cardiovascular or mental disorders than the general population. We are also five times more likely to have permanent medical impairment. How many times can you push the limits of your physical and mental capabilities before it catches up with you? You should have formalized plans in place for dealing with situations in which you need help "lifting up" or when you need "uplifting" help?