

# ADHERENCE TO SEDATION TITRATION GOALS IN THE ICU

## Abstract

**Background & Purpose:** Nurses not adhering to prescribed Richmond Agitation Sedation Scale (RASS) titration goals could expose critically ill patients to prolonged ventilator time, delirium, and other unnecessary risks, including death. However, adherence to sedation titration goals remain problematic both in the U.S. and globally. When uncertain if a patient may inadvertently remove invasive lines, or self-extubate, nurses lean towards deeper sedation. Thus, this quality improvement project sought to evaluate how using a one-hour online educational module would impact the adherence practices of nurses in the Surgical ICU.

**Methods:** The project utilized a pre-test and post-test design on the adherence rate and knowledge of surgical ICU nurses when titrating sedation drips to the ordered RASS goal. Sedation titration knowledge was examined via a 14-question multiple-choice test in the HealthStream online educational module. Adherence was measured using a daily electronic report which used the RASS scores documented by the nurses in the patient's chart and compared it to the physician orders.

**Results:** There were 25 SICU nurses enrolled but only 18 completed the pre-test, educational intervention, and post-test. Baseline adherence rate to the RASS titration goal was 22%. Post intervention, adherence increased to 34% over a 3-month period. Chi Square testing used to interpret the compliance resulted in a P value = 0.004. Thus, indicating statistical significance. Knowledge level increased from an average score of 55% to 90%.

**Conclusion:** *Adherence* to prescribed orders remain an area of opportunity for nurses. This QI project confirmed findings that education, along with audit and feedback to practitioners can improve adherence practices.

**Implications:** Therefore, when we examine the elements needed to increase adherence amongst nurses, further studies are needed to understand the factors that may prevent behavior change.

**Keywords:** Adherence, compliance, sedation titration, RASS, nurses