



ASK A PRACTICE ADVISOR

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Monitoring and interpreting data

Question: As a RN, am I responsible for monitoring as well as interpreting data obtained from tests including equipment that is part of my patient's plan of care?

Answer: Each situation is unique and a number of factors need to be considered:

- Is the function within the RN's scope and job description?
- If so, what are the expectations of care?
- Who is determining if further intervention is required?
- Is the test or equipment yielding information that must be acted on immediately to ensure positive patient outcomes?
- Are appropriate policies in place to support safe practice?

RNs are responsible not only for performing tasks but also for possessing the appropriate knowledge, skill, and judgment required to provide safe, competent care.

The RN performs a number of functions that are more than just the technical task. Monitoring and interpreting data from diagnostic and medical equipment requires critical thinking. The RN is responsible for knowing the purpose of data collection, identifying both normal and abnormal

results, and recognizing when intervention is required because the RN needs to know if the patient is at risk. The RN must know how to intervene appropriately within the RN scope of practice. This standard of care extends to any piece of equipment, procedure or intervention that the RN is utilizing and responsible for.

RNs who are not trained in interpretation of the specific data obtained from a particular technology, must work in the presence of a physician who holds the responsibility for interpretation of the data. However, in many care environments, RNs work independently (e.g. fetal assessment unit, intensive care units, cardiac telemetry units, etc.) and will need to have extensive knowledge of the equipment as well as interpretation of the results in order to provide safe, competent care. Medical equipment often identifies conditions that require immediate intervention and the RN must be able to interpret the results and implement appropriate nursing interventions promptly in order to achieve positive patient outcomes.

The role of the RN extends beyond the performance of tasks and is rooted in the utilization of the knowledge, skill and judgment each of us obtains through our education and experiences.