Background:

Radiation Therapy is an integral part of cancer treatment for many patients, however, radiation can affect the functioning of pacemakers and ICDs.

As healthcare evolves and improves, there continues to be an increase in patient life expectancy as well as the number of patients with pacemakers and implantable cardioverter-defibrillators (ICDs).

To honor our department’s commitment to patient safety, it was necessary to implement a process to safely treat patients with pacemakers and ICDs.

Through a multidisciplinary approach, the Radiation Medicine department developed a standardized method for coordinating pacemaker interrogation.

Pacemaker Protocol:

1. The Radiation Oncology Physician notifies the Physics team when a patient with a pacemaker will begin radiation. The Physician, Dosimetrists, and Physicists work together to create a radiation treatment plan, minimizing the dose to the pacemaker. Physics ensures this dose is safe and will not affect the pacemaker’s functioning.

2. Physics notifies the Nursing team of a recommended schedule for pacemaker interrogation. This schedule is dependent on the type of pacemaker, total dose of radiation, and the proximity of the treatment area to the pacemaker.

3. Nursing coordinates with cardiology to schedule pacemaker interrogation. This is typically done before a patient begins treatment and again after they have finished, but can be done more frequently as necessary.

4. Nursing verifies that the pacemaker interrogation is complete before the patient begins their initial treatment.

Radiation Medicine Mission Statement:

We are here to improve the quality of life for everyone we encounter. We are profoundly aware of the suffering that is endured; therefore, it is our mission to consistently show that every individual is valued.

It is a privilege to serve our community. We treat our patients and our teammates with respect knowing that we all embrace the same goal of continued excellence in patient care and patient safety. The public can trust us and our actions prove that we, ourselves, are trustworthy.

We demonstrate compassion to our patients and our coworkers which creates a work culture of tolerance, teamwork, and thankfulness. We use our collective voices to make a positive difference; collaboration keeps us moving onward toward excellence.

Our Commitment:

Our department will continue to develop new procedures and protocols to ensure increased patient safety.

References:

