

Taser Injuries – What Nurses Need to Know

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Topic: Leading & Advancing Improvements in Health, Health Care, & Higher Education

Category: Quality Improvement/Evidence-Based Practice Project

Abstract

Background/Introduction

Law enforcement, private and public security services and the general public are using TASER devices more and more frequently to subdue violent or aggressive individuals without excessive force. These patients are seen frequently in emergency departments, urgent care centers and primary care offices. Knowledge of TASER function and the body's physiologic response is necessary to affect appropriate patient management.

Purpose

This presentation will discuss the variety and types of TASER devices commonly used in the United States including their action and function. Pertinent history questions and exam finding will be highlighted. Safe and effective removal of Taser barbs including tips and hints for expediting removal will be provided with photographic examples for visualization of step-by-step removal.

Methods or Processes/Procedures

A literature review was performed to identify the most up-to-date information and statistics on use and injuries associated with TASER injuries.

Results

TASERs interfere with the ability of the brain to communicate with the muscles. Falls are the most significant, common TASER injuries. Cardiac arrest and dysrhythmias are uncommon when used appropriately and the exposure lasts for < 15 seconds. High voltage with low wattage is the key to understanding the low electrical risk.

Limitations

Small literature sample available

Conclusions/Implications for Practice

Current medical literature does not support the need for routine laboratory studies, electrocardiograms or prolonged ED observation after electrical exposure from a Electrical Control Device in an otherwise asymptomatic awake and alert individual. Full assessment for falls injuries is paramount.

Biography

Elizabeth Blunt is the Director of NP Programs at Villanova University and is responsible for curriculum development and clinical teaching in the programs. She has been an NP for over 20 years and has published and presented nationally and internationally. Her clinical practice is emergency and primary care. She teaches minor procedures and suture workshops.

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