

Title: Take Care of Yourself First: Pausing to Don Full PPE

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Background: Hospital resuscitation teams, especially Code Blue responders faced deep moral distress while caring for patients with the coronavirus. Chest compressions and intubation are aerosolizing generating procedures (AGP). Just as the coronavirus pandemic began in 2020, the American Heart Association changed Resuscitation guidelines to focus upon reducing responder exposure rather than directing immediate attention to the victim. The new guidelines required health care workers to leave the newly discovered unresponsive, breathless and pulses patient to don full Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Here is the point of moral distress for the responder, taking care of your first goes against all medical and nursing training. The project sought to investigate how the short delay in beginning chest compressions influenced the outcomes of patients who experienced in-hospital cardiopulmonary arrests.

Methods: The Institutional Review Board approved a quality improvement plan for retroactive chart reviews. The authors gathered reports of events in 2019 that occurred prior to the new Standards for staff to don full PPE. Then the authors collected the same information during subsequent years: 2020, 2021, and the first two calendar quarters of 2022. Survival of first in-hospital event and survival to hospital discharge established the outcome comparisons between the two groups: Group A 2019 and Group B 2020, 2021, 2022.

Results: Chart reviews include both electronic and paper documents: N=121 in 2019, N=145 in 2020, N=214 in 2021 and N=115 for the first two quarters of 2022. Statistical significance using t-tests is absent in either survival of first event (0.32) or survival to hospital discharge (0.83).

Conclusions/Clinical Implications: Moral distress on the part of staff may be less as the findings do not support a statistical significance in outcomes with the new practice of donning full PPE. Protecting hospital staff during AGP is vital, learning more details about the effect of small delays is important as well.