BLOOD CLOT FILTER IMPLICATED IN DEATHS

While one design is particularly dangerous, all blood clot filters can be potentially problematic

Response of Dr. R. Eugene Zierler, professor of surgery at the University of Washington, Seattle, on the “IVC filter complications common, retrieval rare” presentation at the MVSS Annual Meeting by Dr. Go et al:

“The results of this study speak for themselves – only a very small proportion of temporary filters are actually removed, and penetration of the inferior vena cava and adjacent structures by filter components is relatively common. It is particularly noteworthy that penetration was significantly more common with temporary filters vs. permanent filters, and the risk of penetration increased with time in place. These observations alone should inspire efforts to remove temporary filters as soon as clinically possible. The data presented also indicate that a large proportion of filters are being placed for prophylaxis or relative indications, suggesting that current evidence-based guidelines are not being followed.”

Cause Mapping is a Root Cause Analysis method that captures basic cause-and-effect relationships supported with evidence.

1. Problem
   - Problem(s)
     - Death/serious injury associated with medical device
   - Date
     - 2003-present
   - The vast majority of temporary filters are not removed in a timely manner
   - Many healthcare facilities
   - Recovery filter
   - Preventing blood clots from reaching heart or lungs in patients who can’t tolerate blood thinners

2. Analysis
   - Detailed Cause Map - Add detail as information becomes available.
   - Patient Safety Goal Impacted
     - At least 27 patient deaths
   - Compliance Goal Impacted
     - At least 117 lawsuits
   - Patient Services Goal Impacted
     - 300 non-fatal problems reported

3. Solutions
   - Possible Solution: Remove filters as soon as risk of embolism has subsided
   - Frequency: ~250,000 blood clot filters implanted in patients in the US every year

For a free copy of our Root Cause Analysis Template in Microsoft Excel, used to create this page, visit our web site.