

Tip of the Month



Rushin' Roulette

Whenver venipunctures are hastily performed, phlebotomy becomes a dangerous game of Rushin' Roulette. How much time do you spend drawing a patient's blood sample? Do you take the time you need to collect samples correctly or do you allow the procedure to spin out of control? To see if you are gambling with your patients' well-being... and your own... take this self-assessment.

Hand Hygiene

- I always perform hand hygiene before and after every draw. It's good infection control and my patients deserve this.
- I sometimes skip this step if I'm in a big hurry. My hands/gloves look clean enough. Besides, who's gonna know?

Patient Identification

- I strictly adhere to patient identification protocols, even if I know the patient or have drawn them before.
- If I am familiar with the patient, I'm comfortable skipping this step. It's embarrassing to ask people you know for their name like you forgot it.

Patient Positioning

- I always make sure outpatients are seated in a stationary chair equipped with arm rests before I draw their blood.
- I don't see a problem with drawing a patient who is seated on an exam table or the edge of their bed. I mean, what are the chances that the patient will faint or experience an adverse reaction?

Site Selection

- I always prioritize veins for safety, assessing the safer antecubital veins of both arms before selecting the basilic vein.
- I always stick the first vein I can locate. I get to the next patient faster that way.

Tube Filling

- I consistently follow the correct order of draw to prevent additive carryover, mix tubes slowly and completely, and ensure minimum fill volumes are met.
- The order in which I happen to pick up the tubes is my order of draw. I give each one a quick shake and don't worry about minimum fill volumes. The lab doesn't need that much blood.

Post-puncture Care

- I always apply direct pressure and pause to observe the site for ten seconds until I'm sure bleeding has stopped... not just from the skin, but I make sure a hematoma isn't forming as well.
- As soon as I withdraw the needle, I immediately apply a bandage to the patient without bothering to check the site for bleeding. The patient will be fine and this saves me a lot of time.

If you only checked the first statement for each of the items listed, congratulations! Your winning technique is beating the odds. However, every second choice you made above is a roll of the dice against your patient. Remember, the time you save by betting against the house that your hands are clean, the patient is who you think she is, and the first vein you find is the best one, increases the probability you'll harm the patient. Instead, slow down and double down on proper protocol, not rushin' roulette. Rushing from patient to patient is gambling, with their health at stake.