

Distractions and interruptions in the ICU

Intensive care requires physicians to make critical decisions for very ill patients. Good decisions require an environment free from unnecessary distractions, to allow gathering of large amounts of information, to enable clear team communication, and to facilitate complex cognitive processes. However, the intensive care unit is also a busy place, both in terms of human activity and in terms of patient-related tasks. Fellow co-workers, nurses, allied health personnel, family members, patients and even electronic devices vie for the attention of the intensivist, and often interrupt the latter's activities. This talk aims to describe the frequency and risk factors for distractions and interruptions in the intensive care unit, and to outline ways that we can mitigate them.