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QA Quarterly

As the healthcare landscape continues to evolve, staying ahead of compliance and accreditation requirements has become more critical than ever for surgical facilities and office-based practices.

Risk management has traditionally been a fragmented and largely manual industry, consisting of individuals and small groups offering localized, in-person assessments without leveraging modern technology. **At UHC, we have transformed risk management from this cottage industry into a scalable, technology-driven enterprise that maximizes efficiency.** Through our UHCloud, we've developed a platform that not only automates compliance processes but also provides continuous, real-time insights into facility operations —taking risk management to a level that was previously unattainable. Recently, we've seen significant trends that are impacting our clients and the broader healthcare community. One of the most prominent trends is the increasing emphasis on digital compliance and automated tracking. Accrediting bodies are expecting facilities to not only meet standards but also demonstrate proactive management of compliance tasks, such as tracking licenses, permits, and crash cart medications. This shift is creating a growing need for integrated technology solutions that can automate these requirements, providing real-time oversight and reducing manual errors. Another key trend is the heightened focus on quality assurance (QA) and patient safety metrics.

Facilities are being held to stricter standards regarding infection control, incident tracking, and peer reviews. Accrediting organizations are looking for comprehensive data-driven QA programs that go beyond compliance to demonstrate continuous improvement in patient outcomes. We understand, however, that compliance and accreditation are not just about technology; the human touch remains critically important. Personalized support, tailored advice, and on-site assistance are integral components of effective risk management. At UHC, we seamlessly combine the efficiencies of technology with the warmth and attentiveness of personal service. Our clients benefit from a comprehensive, turnkey approach that integrates advanced tools while ensuring each facility receives individualized attention and support. **Our proactive risk management and quality assurance programs not only simplify compliance but also foster a culture of safety and excellence.** By integrating these new approaches, we aim to reduce administrative burden, enhance patient care, and improve efficiency for our clients. As the healthcare environment changes, we'll continue to adapt our services and technology to empower your facility to thrive.

**-ERIC ("RICK") CONN,
PRESIDENT & CEO**



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At UHC, our mission of patient safety is not just a statement—it’s the driving force behind everything we do.

Universal Healthcare Consulting, Inc. was founded with a singular mission in mind: **patient safety**. This guiding principle, conceived by Rick and myself during our initial mission statement meeting, has been the cornerstone of everything we do. When the Florida Board of Medicine set new anesthesia standards for office surgical facilities, UHC quickly became indispensable in navigating these complex regulations. As other states adopted similar standards and accreditation requirements from entities like Quad A, AAAHC, and The Joint Commission, we expanded our services to assist facilities in achieving and maintaining compliance. Unlike other firms, UHC differentiates itself by acting as an extension of our clients' teams. We provide comprehensive education on infection control, robust Quality Assurance and Performance Improvement (QAPI) programs through UHCloud, and effective Risk Management strategies, ensuring not just patient safety but also a safe and efficient environment for physicians and staff.

Today, UHC boasts a dedicated team of 15 professionals across various divisions including risk management, client support, credentialing, business development, and marketing. We are constantly evolving our software to meet the growing needs of the healthcare industry. From our first client in Florida to now over 300 clients across 30 states and international territories, UHC has grown significantly while maintaining the personalized service that defines us.

At UHC, our mission of patient safety is not just a statement—it’s the driving force behind everything we do; from working with individual physicians to large surgery centers, striving to create safer, more efficient environments where healthcare professionals and patients can thrive.

**-DEBBI CONN,
VICE PRESIDENT & CHIEF RISK OFFICER**

By the Numbers: UHC's Survey Success

BELOW IS A SUMMARY OF THE SURVEYS PERFORMED FOR UHC CLIENTS ACROSS VARIOUS ACCREDITING BODIES. THESE NUMBERS HIGHLIGHT OUR COMMITMENT TO SUPPORTING FACILITIES IN ACHIEVING COMPLIANCE AND EXCELLENCE IN PATIENT SAFETY.

Survey Type	Surveys Performed (Total 2024)
QUAD A	73
AAAHC	18
FL Board of Medicine	51
FL AHCA	4
Joint Commission	1
Number of Deficiency-Free Surveys	52 (35%)

Behind the Survey: Common Compliance Challenges



Unsigned Lab Reports

Ensuring that patient lab reports are signed by a surgeon or healthcare professional is crucial for patient safety, legal compliance, and accurate clinical decision-making. A signature confirms that the report has been thoroughly reviewed, ensuring the accuracy of results and timely intervention for abnormal findings. It also provides accountability for the facility and continuity of care for the patient.



Electrical System Inspection

Electrical failures aren't just an inconvenience—they can disrupt surgeries, impact life support systems, and compromise patient care. Regular system checks help prevent these risks, keep facilities compliant with safety regulations, and catch small issues before they turn into costly problems. Routine inspections of fuse boxes, outlets, breakers, and generators are vital in healthcare settings to ensure that critical medical equipment stays powered and patients are safe.



Grounding Pads

Grounding pads for electrosurgical units, like Bovie's, should never be reused to ensure patient safety. Reusing a pad increases the risk of burns, infection, and device malfunction due to loss of adhesive and compromised electrical contact. Following manufacturer instructions, which mandate single use, is crucial to prevent potential harm and ensure compliance with safety standards. Always use a new grounding pad for each procedure to protect patients and maintain proper electrosurgical function.



Oxygen Tank Safety

Improper storage of oxygen tanks, particularly failing to secure them with chains or in racks, is a common deficiency identified during surgical facility inspections. Accrediting bodies require oxygen cylinders to be securely stored to prevent tipping or falling, which can cause serious injuries or accidents. To ensure compliance, tanks must be properly chained, separated by status (full vs. empty), stored in well-ventilated, hazard-free areas, and managed by staff trained in safe handling protocols. Addressing this deficiency is crucial for maintaining safety and accreditation standards in surgical facilities.

Noteworthy News:

Chevron Doctrine's Effect on Healthcare Compliance

As healthcare evolves, so too do the regulations that govern it. One of the most impactful legal developments that has occurred in 2024 is the potential reversal of the Chevron Doctrine, a legal principle that has guided how courts defer to regulatory agencies, like the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), when interpreting healthcare laws.

For decades, this doctrine has provided stability, allowing agencies to enforce and interpret ambiguous regulations without significant judicial interference. But what happens now that the Chevron Doctrine is reversed? While this might initially sound like a daunting change, it opens new doors for how we approach healthcare compliance moving forward.

What Does This Mean for Healthcare Compliance?

Without the Chevron Doctrine, courts may take a more active role in interpreting healthcare regulations. Rather than deferring to agency expertise, judges will have a greater say in deciding what certain healthcare laws mean. While this could create some uncertainty, it also offers exciting opportunities for clarity and refinement in how regulations are enforced.

A Shift Toward Judicial Oversight

In the world of healthcare compliance, we may see more court decisions shaping the rules we follow. This can be a positive change, as judicial review can help clarify ambiguous regulations, making compliance more straightforward for healthcare facilities. For those of us involved in managing compliance, this means staying proactive—monitoring court rulings and adjusting our programs as needed to ensure we're always aligned with the most current interpretations.

Embracing Flexibility and Adaptation

Change is nothing new in healthcare, and compliance professionals have always thrived in environments that require flexibility. As we move into this new era of regulatory interpretation, it will be important to embrace adaptability. Compliance programs may need to become more dynamic, allowing us to pivot as new legal interpretations emerge.

What's Next?

The reversal of the Chevron Doctrine presents a turning point in healthcare compliance—one that allows us to rethink how we interpret and implement regulations. While change can bring challenges, it also brings opportunities for growth and improvement. As we navigate this transition, we'll continue to ensure that our clients are well-prepared for any regulatory developments ahead.

At Universal Healthcare Consulting, we see this as an opportunity to enhance the way we help our clients. With more judicial involvement, healthcare organizations may experience greater clarity in how they are expected to comply with industry standards. We are committed to staying ahead of these changes, providing up-to-date guidance and proactive risk management solutions to ensure our clients remain compliant, no matter what shifts in regulation occur.

We look forward to helping you adapt to these changes and remain confident that, together, we'll thrive in this evolving healthcare landscape.

**-OLIVIA SALVIANO, MHA
REGULATORY COMPLIANCE**



WHERE EXPERTISE MEETS INNOVATION, WE DELIVER COMPLIANCE SOLUTIONS THAT GO BEYOND THE COMPETITION



Concierge, hands-on approach tailored to your facility's unique needs, with direct access to a personal QA Specialist and onsite support as requested

Proprietary UHCloud® compliance platform provides complete 24/7 program that meets and exceeds accrediting body standards.

Infection prevention, credentialing workflows, and risk management tied directly to improving patient outcomes.

In-depth knowledge of all accrediting standards & state, federal, and International regulatory requirements integrated into customized policies.

Full-service risk management program oversight by assigned QA specialist which includes staff training, audits, all required documentation, and QA reports.

Ongoing compliance audits, retraining, and corrective action plans ensure facilities stay compliant long-term.

VS

CONCIERGE SERVICE

**SOFTWARE +
SUPPORT**

**PATIENT SAFETY
FOCUS**

EXPERTISE

HOLISTIC APPROACH

**POST-
ACCREDITATION
GUIDANCE**

COMPETITORS

Limited personal support, often focusing solely on selling software without personalized consulting.

Software-only solutions that lack actionable insights and expert interpretation.

Compliance-focused approaches that overlook broader impacts on patient safety and operational excellence.

Narrow expertise limited to specific accrediting bodies, restricting flexibility and customization.

Focus primarily on software tracking, leaving other critical compliance areas unaddressed.

Limited or no personal support after accreditation, leaving facilities to manage ongoing compliance on their own.

AT UNIVERSAL HEALTHCARE, WE KNOW THAT COMPLIANCE IS ABOUT MORE THAN TICKING BOXES.

It's about creating safer, more efficient healthcare environments where patients and staff thrive. By combining cutting-edge technology with personalized service, we deliver solutions that competitors simply can't match. That's Universal Healthcare.



*Trusted by over 300 healthcare facilities across 30+ states and international territories.

*Customized compliance strategies.

*Trusted source for solutions to exceed patient safety.

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COMPLIANCE MADE SIMPLE, SAFETY MADE PERSONAL. EXPERIENCE THE UHC DIFFERENCE.

Raising the Bar: Quality Assurance Insights

Maintaining Air Quality in the Surgical Suite: Ensuring Staff and Patient Safety



In the OR, maintaining clean, safe air is crucial for both patient safety and the health of the surgical team. Two key concerns that impact air quality in the surgical suite are anesthetic waste gases and surgical smoke, both of which contain hazardous substances. Addressing these concerns through proper air quality management can significantly reduce the risks associated with prolonged exposure to toxic substances, thereby enhancing safety in the OR.

The Dangers of Anesthetic Waste Gas

Anesthetic waste gases are inhalation agents, such as nitrous oxide and volatile anesthetics, used to keep patients unconscious during surgery. Without proper ventilation and gas scavenging systems, these gases can accumulate in the OR air, exposing staff to several potential health hazards, including:

- Neurological effects, such as dizziness, headaches, fatigue, and impaired cognitive function, which are associated with chronic exposure.
- Reproductive health risks like increased rates of miscarriages, infertility, and reduced sperm quality among OR personnel.
- Respiratory problems such as coughing, shortness of breath, and irritation of the respiratory system.
- Potential long-term carcinogenic risks, though more research is needed to conclusively link anesthetic gases to specific cancers

These risks highlight the importance of installing anesthetic gas scavenging systems in surgical facilities, which capture and safely remove waste gases from the OR air.

The Hazards of Surgical Smoke

Surgical smoke is generated when tissue is vaporized during procedures such as electrosurg-

ery and laser surgery. The smoke released contains harmful chemicals, biohazardous particles, and even viable viruses or bacteria. These toxic fumes pose both immediate and long-term health risks for OR staff, including:

- Exposure to over 150 toxic chemicals, including benzene, formaldehyde, and hydrogen cyanide.
- Carcinogenic substances like polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), which have been linked to increased cancer risk.
- Respiratory irritants that can cause chronic coughing, asthma-like symptoms, and long-term lung conditions.
- The risk of inhaling infectious agents, which could transmit viruses and bacteria

For optimal air quality, OR teams should implement surgical smoke evacuation systems. These systems remove smoke at the source, preventing toxic substances from entering the OR atmosphere. This is especially important for protecting staff who may otherwise inhale harmful particles with every procedure.

Strategies for Improving Air Quality

To ensure the safety of both staff and patients, surgical facilities should adopt a comprehensive approach to air quality management. This includes:

1. Installing proper ventilation systems: Advanced HVAC systems with high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters can help circulate clean air and remove contaminants.
2. Using anesthetic gas scavenging systems: These systems are essential for safely capturing and removing waste gases from the OR to prevent exposure.
3. Employing surgical smoke evacuation systems: Evacuation systems should be used during any smoke-generating procedure to protect against harmful chemical and biological particles.
4. Regular air quality monitoring: Ongoing assessments of air quality levels help identify and address potential issues before they become a safety risk.
5. Training staff: OR personnel should be educated about the risks of anesthetic gases and surgical smoke and how to use safety systems effectively.

Looking Ahead: Regulatory Trends

Several states have recognized the importance of protecting OR staff from surgical smoke, with

18 states passing legislation requiring surgical smoke evacuation systems in operating rooms. Additionally, more states have pending legislation aimed at further regulating air quality in healthcare facilities. As awareness of the risks of poor air quality in surgical settings grows, we can expect to see even more stringent regulations aimed at improving OR environments across the country.

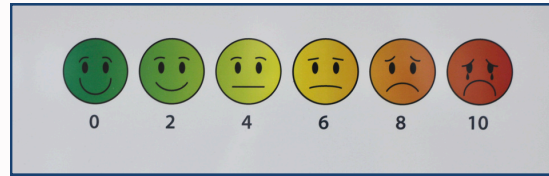
Conclusion

Maintaining safe air quality in the OR is critical for protecting the health of both patients and surgical staff. By investing in the right air filtration, scavenging, and evacuation systems, surgical facilities can reduce exposure to hazardous substances like anesthetic waste gases and surgical smoke, ultimately creating a safer, healthier work environment. As regulations continue to evolve, staying informed and proactive about air quality management will be key to ensuring compliance and safeguarding health in the surgical suite.

STATES THAT HAVE ENACTED LEGISLATION REQUIRING SURGICAL SMOKE EVACUATION IN OPERATING ROOMS FOR ASCS:

- Arizona: Passed in 2023 and went into effect on July 1
- California: Passed legislation
- Colorado: Passed legislation
- Connecticut: Passed legislation
- Georgia: Passed legislation
- Illinois: Passed legislation
- Kentucky: Passed legislation
- Louisiana: Passed legislation
- Minnesota: Passed in 2024 and went into effect on January 1, 2025
- Missouri: Passed legislation
- New Jersey: Passed legislation
- New York: Passed legislation
- Ohio: Passed in 2023 and went into effect on October 1
- Oregon: Passed legislation
- Rhode Island: Passed the first surgical smoke evacuation requirement in 2018
- Virginia: Passed in 2024 and goes into effect on July 1, 2025
- Washington: Passed legislation
- West Virginia: Passed in 2024

The Imperative of Establishing Rigorous Pain Assessment and Management Protocols in Surgical Facilities



Effective pain management is a cornerstone of patient care in surgical settings, addressing both the physiological and psychological dimensions of pain. For patients undergoing surgical interventions, the development and implementation of structured pain assessment and management protocols are critical. These protocols not only promote recovery but also enhance overall patient outcomes by mitigating the adverse effects of unrelieved pain, which can include psychological distress, delayed healing, and extended hospital stays.

The Multifaceted Nature of Pain Management

Pain is more than a physiological response to injury or illness—it is also intertwined with emotional, spiritual, and psychological experiences. Uncontrolled pain has far-reaching consequences, such as increased stress, anxiety, and even depression, which can negatively impact a patient's ability to recover. For surgical facilities, ensuring that pain is properly assessed and managed requires a holistic approach that addresses both physical discomfort and the broader emotional effects of pain.

Establishing Evidence-Based Pain Assessment Protocols

Given the subjective nature of pain, its assessment must rely heavily on the patient's self-report whenever possible. The use of validated tools, such as the Numeric Rating Scale and the FACES Pain Rating Scale, offers a standardized approach to quantifying pain intensity. The FLACC scale provides a structured method for assessing pain in individuals unable to communicate verbally, including infants and cognitively impaired patients. These tools enable healthcare providers to track pain levels over time and make informed decisions about pain management interventions.

A Multimodal Approach to Pain Management

Effective pain management extends beyond pharmacological interventions. While opioids and non-opioid analgesics play a vital role in controlling acute and chronic pain, the inclusion of non-pharmacological therapies, such as heat/cold application, massage, and guided ima-

gery, is essential in enhancing the patient's comfort. Research has shown that multimodal approaches to pain management can reduce reliance on opioids, thereby minimizing the risks associated with opioid therapy, such as dependence and adverse side effects.

In surgical facilities, this comprehensive approach to pain management is particularly crucial for high-risk populations, such as the elderly, children, and those with chronic pain conditions. Tailoring pain management strategies to the unique needs of these groups ensures that pain is effectively controlled, while also accounting for potential complications related to pharmacological treatments.

Integrating Patient and Family Engagement in Pain Management

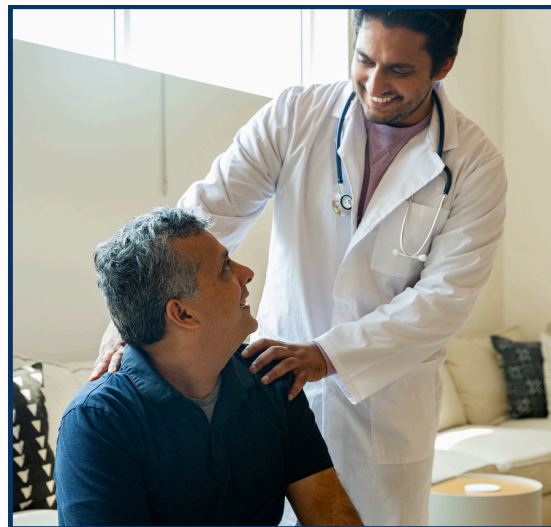
A patient-centered approach to pain management emphasizes the importance of engaging patients and their families in the development of pain management plans. Involving patients in their care enhances their sense of autonomy and fosters trust between the patient and healthcare team. Additionally, educating patients and their families about pain management options, including the use of pain assessment scales and strategies for reporting pain, empowers them to take an active role in the healing process.

Patients and families should also be educated about the nature of pain, including its potential to vary based on individual circumstances, and how to use pain assessment tools, such as the Numeric Rating Scale or the FACES scale, to communicate their pain levels effectively. This collaboration ensures that pain management plans are tailored to the patient's specific needs, preferences, and cultural or spiritual considerations.

The Role of Surgical Facilities in Pain Management

The development of comprehensive pain assessment and management protocols in surgical facilities is not only essential for enhancing patient care but also for ensuring compliance with best practices and regulatory standards. By adopting evidence-based assessment tools, employing a multimodal approach to pain management, and fostering patient and family engagement, surgical facilities can significantly improve patient outcomes, reduce recovery times, and enhance overall patient satisfaction. Ultimately, the goal is to provide holistic, patient-centered care that addresses both the physical and emotional dimensions of pain, thereby promoting healing and well-being.

Establishing these protocols and continually refining them in response to patient feedback and evolving best practices ensures that surgical facilities remain at the forefront of high-quality, compassionate care.



Thank you for reading!

