

Houston Methodist Hospital Anesthesiology Introduces Airway Teams

As a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Houston Methodist Anesthesiology has introduced new procedures in the Operating Rooms (OR), implementing airway teams in each of the ORs throughout the Walter, Dunn and Main buildings.

Each airway team, outfitted with specialized personal protective equipment (PPE) designed to minimize the spread of COVID-19 during aerosolizing procedures, provides care sequentially for four to five patients, with recommended decontamination processes occurring in the OR between patients. Once initial airway management (intubation, which is defined as an aerosolizing procedure) is concluded by the airway team, the patient's care is returned to the primary anesthesiology team during the surgery. During emergence and extubation, also an aerosolizing procedure, the airway team in PPE returns.

The result is less exposure and reduced use of scarce PPE supplies. The airway team is preferentially using reusable PAPRs, Powered Airway Purifying Respirators, in order to reserve N95 masks for COVID-19 positive/suspected patients.

The implementation of airway teams, while significant in terms of workflow, has been met with overwhelming acceptance by OR personnel, as it's designed for the protection of our staff and our patients. By minimizing the number of personnel donning and doffing PPE a major risk to healthcare personnel is avoided.

For anyone interested in more details, please contact us at 713-441-3493.

The Houston Methodist Hospital Anesthesiology Service

Randy Steadman, MD, MS

Marty Giesecke, MD

Fred Groen, MD