

July 15, 2008 - New York Times article: “ID Tags Interfering with Medical Care”

Hazards: ID Tags Interfering With Medical Care

By ERIC NAGOURNEY

Radio frequency identification tags, the tiny devices that let people drive through tolls without stopping and make life harder for shoplifters, are increasingly being used by [hospitals](#) — to monitor the quality of blood products, for example.

But a new study suggests that the tags may pose a danger when they are kept in places like intensive care units: the signals they give off can interfere with the working of critical care equipment.

[Researchers writing](#) in The Journal of the American Medical Association said they looked at the effect the tags had on 41 different medical devices. In 123 tests, they said, they were able to produce 34 incidents of electromagnetic interference. Twenty-two of the incidents were described as hazardous and involved problems like a syringe pump stopping or an external pacemaker not working correctly. Others were less serious, the researchers said, but could still prove a distraction to medical workers.

Before the tags are put in intensive care units or similar places, the study said, hospitals should require on-site tests for interference with equipment.

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