Please familiarise yourself with the ‘Cardiac Flashcard’ first

This is normal sinus rhythm: defined as P wave with every QRS complex, followed by a T wave. It has a REGULAR QRS pattern, a narrow QRS duration and rate 60-100bpm. In a normal sinus rhythm read from LEAD II on the monitor, the P, R and T waves should all be positive (pointing up)

Many patients are not in normal sinus rhythm in ICU and may have pre-existing rhythm disorders.

At the start of your shift –
• look at the rhythm and note what it looks like
• ask the handover nurse if that is the patient’s ‘normal’ rhythm or if it is new
• ask the handover nurse if the patient has had any rhythm disturbances overnight

Refer to the CARDIAC FLASHCARD for management of dysrhythmias

See over for COMMON cardiac dysrhythmias
Guidelines for NON - CRITICAL CARE staff

Simple guide to cardiac rhythms

ATRIAL FIBRILLATION (AF): no visible P wave, irregular QRS, narrow QRS duration. Can be fast or slow.

ATRIAL FLUTTER: no P waves, but strange ‘saw tooth’ or ‘shark fin’ waves before the QRS. Regular QRS pattern and narrow QRS duration.

SUPRAVENTRICULAR TACHYCARDIA (SVT): very fast – 160-200bpm. No visible P wave, regular QRS pattern and narrow QRS duration.
Guidelines for NON - CRITICAL CARE staff
Simple guide to cardiac rhythms

VENTRICULAR TACHYCARDIA (VT) – 2 examples: very fast – 160-220bpm. No P wave, regular QRS pattern and BROAD QRS duration. VT is ‘FAT QRS, FAST, REGULAR’

VENTRICULAR FIBRILLATION (VF) – patient is in cardiac arrest and needs CPR. No recognisable complexes can be seen. No organised electrical activity is present.

WHEN WORKING IN ICU PLEASE ENSURE –
- You know the ALS/BLS algorithms and where the emergency trolley & defib are
- You have read the ‘CARDIAC FLASH CARD’
- You have been shown how to use 5 lead cardiac monitoring

Changes to rate, rhythm or ANYTHING that you think ‘looks different’ may be significant – please inform a senior colleague and .....

“WHEN IN DOUBT, PRINT IT OUT”
TAKE A 12 LEAD ECG AND SHOW TO A SENIOR ICU COLLEAGUE

Practice Education Team Critical Care BSUH 2020