

DCS No:
Date: November 16, 1990

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE--PNO-I-90-98

This preliminary notification constitutes EARLY notice of events of POSSIBLE safety or public interest significance. The information is as initially received without verification or evaluation, and is basically all that is known by the Region I staff on this date.

Facility: Albert Einstein Medical Center
New York, New York

Licensee Emergency Classification:
____ Notification of Unusual Event
____ Alert
____ Site Area Emergency
____ General Emergency
X Not Applicable

Subject: TELEHERAPY MISADMINISTRATIONS

On November 15, the New York City Health Department was informed by the licensee that they had discovered an error which resulted in an unknown number of patients receiving treatment doses approximately 50% lower than intended. A computer program had been used to generate teletherapy treatment plans. The computer code for therapy utilizing an "old" 45 degree wedge was determined to be accurate, however, a "new" wedge used during treatment of patients was different from that used in the computer code. The computer code has been used for the past four or five years, however, the "new" 45 degree wedge had been used infrequently during that period and it appears that very few patients, possibly as few as one, were involved. According to the Department of Health, the teletherapy unit at Albert Einstein is used mostly for palliative treatments. The Department is sending an inspector to the licensee's facility today to investigate the matter. Previous inspections of the licensee (9/88 and 5/89) resulted in no violations and it had been noted that teletherapy calibrations had been satisfactory. The licensee has now reprogrammed the computer with data for the "new" wedge and labeled the "old" wedge "Do Not Use". The Department of Health will require the licensee to perform an output check with the "new" wedge prior to utilizing it for treatments. Due to the fact that the licensee's accelerator is down, the Department is temporarily allowing the licensee to continue to use the teletherapy unit for treatments not involving the use of a wedge.

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