PURPOSE:
To objectively assess and document changes in muscle tone.

CONSIDERATIONS:
1. Tone is the normal state of tension in a muscle.
2. There are three stages of muscle tone:
   a. Normal muscle tone: The state of balanced tension in the body tissues.
   b. Flaccid tone: Lack of tone, lack of tension within the body tissues.
   c. Spastic tone: Hyper tone, state of partial muscle contraction when the muscle is at rest.
3. Subjective terms such as mild, moderate and severe are NOT effective in showing slight changes in tone.
4. Gross terms such as flaccid and spastic DO NOT show slow changes in tone.
5. An assessment scale is required to objectively document changes in tone.
6. The most reliable assessment tool is the Modified Ashworth Scale.

EQUIPMENT:
Copy of the Modified Ashworth Scale

PROCEDURE:
1. Position the patient in a comfortable position.
2. Explain the assessment procedure to the patient.
3. Move any objects that may be in the way of passive motion, such as bed rails, catheter or linens.
4. The limb is supported with one hand while the opposite hand slowly and steadily moves the muscle to be tested through passive range of motion (PROM).
5. Rate the muscle response according to the following scale:
   a. No increase in muscle tone.
   b. Slight increase in muscle tone, manifested by a catch and release or by minimal resistance at the end of the PROM when the affected part(s) is moved in flexion or extension.
   c. Slight increase in muscle tone, manifested by a catch, followed by minimal resistance throughout the PROM.
   d. More marked increase in muscle tone through most of the PROM. but affected part(s) easily moved.
   e. Considerable increase in muscle tone, passive movement difficult.
   f. Affected part(s) rigid in flexion or extension.

AFTER CARE:
1. Document in the patient’s chart the tolerance to the session.
2. Return any moved equipment, such as bed rail catheter and bed linens, to their original position.

REFERENCES:
