Richmond Agitation-Sedation Scale

REFERENCE

WHAT IT IS

An instrument measuring agitation, from combative to calm

Also measures level of consciousness, from alert to comatose

Guides sedative therapy and flags patients at risk of self-injury from agitation

Also identifies excessive sedation

HOW IT IS SCORED

- Step 1: baseline observation
- Step 2: response to verbal stimulation
- Step 3: response to physical stimulation
- Produces a single-digit score from -5 (comatose) to +5 (combative)

WHEN TO DOCUMENT

- Patients receiving benzodiazepines or narcotics also get a RASS score
- Document before delivery of the medication
- Repeat every 15 minutes

WHY IT MATTERS

- One shared number for agitation and sedation depth
- Ties sedation decisions to an assessment, not an impression

Take Home Message:

Score RASS before benzodiazepines or narcotics and every 15 minutes after — observation, voice, then physical stimulation.