

RICHMOND AGITATION-SEDATION SCORE (RASS)



The Ruins of Richmond, American Civil War, April 1865, Mathew Brady.

*Virgil Caine is my name, and I drove on the Danville train
Till so much cavalry came and tore up the tracks again
In the winter of '65, we were hungry, just barely alive
I took the train to Richmond that fell,
It was a time I remember,
Oh so well*

*The night they drove old Dixie down,
And all the bells were ringing
The night they drove old Dixie down,
And all the people were singin'
They went
Naaaaaa na na na naaaaa*

Na na na naaaaa na na na nanaa naaaaaa

*Back with my wife in Tennessee,
And one day she said to me
“Virgil, quick, come see,
There goes Robert E Lee”
Now I don’t mind choppin’ wood,
And I don’t care if the money’s no good
Just take what ya need and leave the rest,
But they should never have taken the very best*

*The night they drove old Dixie down,
And all the bells were ringing
The night they drove old Dixie down,
And all the people were singin’ they went
Naaaaaa na na na na naaaaa
Na na na naaaaa na na na nanaa naaaaaa*

*Like my father before me,
I’m a working man
And like my brother before me,
I took a rebel stand
Well he was just eighteen, proud and brave,
But a Yankee laid him in his grave
I swear by the blood below my feet,
You can’t raise a Caine back up
When it’s in defeat*

*The night they drove old Dixie down,
And all the bells were ringing,
The night they drove old Dixie down,
And all the people were singin’,
They went
Naaaaaa na na na na naaaaa
Na na na naaaaa na na na nanaa naaaaaa*

Joan Baez, “The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down”, 1971

In Richmond Jefferson Davis was attending 10 o’clock services that Sunday morning at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church when the sexton handed him a message.

“President Davis, my lines are broken in three places. Richmond must be evacuated this evening”.
(Robert E. Lee).

“I happened to sit in the rear of the President’s pew, so near that I plainly saw the sort of gray pallor that came upon his face as he read a scrap of paper thrust into his hand”.
(Mary Chesnut)

Davis hurried from the church and ordered his government to move to Danville, Virginia, 140 miles to the south. On the evening of April 2, Davis and his cabinet boarded the last train, a series of freight cars labelled "treasury department", "quartermaster's department", "war department".

"We tried to comfort ourselves by saying in low tones that the capital was only moved temporarily, that General Lee would make a stand and repulse the daring enemy, and that we would yet win the battle and the day".

(Mary Chesnut)

"Everything was in the wildest confusion. The low characters of the town had broken into everything and were looting the town, being aided to a considerable extent by the soldiers who had broken through all discipline".

(Richmond resident)

"I saw a Confederate soldier on horseback pause under my window. He wheeled and fired behind him, rode a short distance, wheeled and fired again. Coming up the street rode a body of men in blue".

(Richmond resident)

"....Richmond has fallen, and I have no heart to write about it. They are too many for us. Everything lost in Richmond, even our archives. Blue-black is our horizon. There is a stillness in the midst of which Richmond, with her ruins and her unchanging spires, rests beneath a ghastly, fitful glare. We are under the shadow of ruins. From the pavements where we walk stretches a vista of devastation. The wreck, the loneliness seem interminable. There is no sound of life but the stillness of the catacomb, only as our footsteps fall dull on the deserted sidewalk and a funeral troop of echoes bump against the dead walls and closed shutters in reply.

And this is Richmond, says a melancholy voice. And this is Richmond..."

(Mary Chesnut).

Ken Burns', "The Civil War", 1990.

Unknown to most today the small American town of Richmond, Virginia could have been one of the great capital cities of the world. During the time of the American Civil War it was the capital of the Rebel States - the Confederate States of America. It is one of history's greatest - "what ifs" - if the South had won the war or if the North had lost it by the agency of the defeat of Abraham Lincoln in the elections of 1864, the world would today be one totally unrecognizable to us. How for instance would the First and Second World wars have played out, when North America itself would in all probability have been engaged in its own pointless ongoing infighting?

During the time of the Civil War, the city of Richmond was the barometer by which the fortunes of the South could be closely monitored. During the battle of the Seven Days its fall would have marked the end of the war in 1861. But thanks to brilliant Southern commanders it withstood no less than six attempted Northern invasions, until the seventh

under Ulysses S. Grant finally saw Richmond's fall - and this rather by dint of the fact that Lee simply ran out of men and material- rather than being beaten in any meaningful military sense by Grant who had at his disposal overwhelmingly superior resources by the last months of the war.

The fall of Richmond - over one and half centuries ago - still to this day holds a deeply sad resonance for many Southern Americans, they retain its distant memory in their culture, folk-law, and ballads.

It seems somewhat apt that the score by which we may monitor the well being of those who hover under anaesthesia close to the life - death interface, goes by the name of the Richmond Sedation Score.



In the winter of '65, we were hungry, just barely alive.....

RICHMOND AGITATION-SEDATION SCORE (RASS)

Introduction

The **Richmond Agitation-Sedation Score (or “RASS”)** describes the depth of sedation or the level of alertness or agitation in a patient.

It is predominantly used in mechanically ventilated patients in order to avoid over or under sedation.

The Richmond Agitation and Sedation Scale (RASS) is a **validated** and **reliable** method to assess patients' level of sedation in the ED or ICU.

As opposed to the Glasgow Coma Scale (GCS), the RASS is not limited to patients with intracranial processes.

Levels of Sedation

The depth of sedation represents a **continuum**, that may be subjectively classified as:

1. **Minimal sedation:**
 - Anxiolysis only
2. **Moderate sedation:**
 - Responsive to verbal or tactile stimuli (verbal or tactile); airway reflexes, spontaneous ventilation, and cardiovascular function are maintained.
3. **Deep sedation:**
 - Responsive purposefully to repeated or painful stimuli; airway reflexes or spontaneous ventilation may not be maintained, but cardiovascular function is preserved.
4. **General anaesthesia:**
 - A state of unconsciousness and profound unresponsiveness such that the autonomic nervous system is unable to respond to surgical or procedural stimuli.
5. **Dissociation:**
 - A distinct type of moderate sedation characteristic of phencyclidines such as ketamine that cause a disconnection between the thalamoneocortical system and the limbic systems, preventing higher centers from receiving sensory stimuli.

Airway reflexes, spontaneous ventilation, and cardiovascular function are all maintained.

Benefits of Sedation in Ventilated Patients

These include:

1. Allowing the patients to tolerate painful/distressing procedures (e.g. endotracheal intubation, invasive lines)
2. Optimises mechanical ventilation (e.g. toleration of permissive hypercapnea)
3. Reduction of O₂ consumption (e.g. in sepsis)
4. Reduction of ICP in neurosurgical patients
5. Facilitation of cooling (e.g. patients with dangerous hyperpyrexia)
6. The control of agitation

Adverse Effects

These include:

1. Hypotension
2. Respiratory depression
3. Arrhythmias
4. Drug specific side effects
5. Sleep disturbance
6. Withdrawal (i.e. upon removal of sedating drugs).
7. Delirium

RASS Scoring Method

The **Richmond Agitation-Sedation Score (or “RASS”)** is one method describing the depth of sedation or the level of alertness or agitation in a patient.

It is predominantly used in mechanically ventilated patients in order to avoid over or under sedation.

It is scored as follows:

SCORE	LABEL	DESCRIPTION
<i>DIRECT OBSERVATION</i>		
+ 4	Combative	Combative, violent, immediate danger to staff
+ 3	Very Agitated	Pulls to remove tubes or catheters; aggressive
+ 2	Agitated	Frequent non-purposeful movement, fights ventilator
+ 1	Restless	Anxious, apprehensive, movements not aggressive
0	Alert & Calm	Spontaneously pays attention to caregiver
<i>RESPONSE TO VOICE</i>		
- 1	Drowsy	Not fully alert, but has sustained awakening to voice, (eye opening & contact >10 sec)
- 2	Light Sedation	Briefly awakens to voice (eyes open & contact <10 sec)
- 3	Moderate Sedation	Movement or eye opening to voice (no eye contact)
<i>RESPONSE TO TOUCH</i>		
- 4	Deep Sedation	No response to voice, but movement or eye opening to physical stimulation
- 5	Unarousable	No response to voice or physical stimulation

Interpretation

Mechanically ventilated that are deeply sedated (RASS of -3 or less) have been shown to remain intubated and mechanically ventilated for longer periods of time. This in turn leads to longer ICU stays and higher mortality.

An ideal RASS of - 2 to 0 has been advocated in this patient population in order to minimize sedation.

This strategy has been shown to reduce mortality, and to decrease the duration of mechanical ventilation and the length of stay in the ICU.

Mechanically ventilated patients that are too agitated are at risk of self-extubation and of ventilator dyssynchrony.



"....he was just eighteen, proud and brave....." Boy soldier, American Civil War



Richmond, Civil War Period.

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