Instructions for the Assessment of the Individual Categories of the FOUR Score

Eye Response (E)
Grade the best possible response after at least 3 trials in an attempt to elicit the best level of alertness. A score of E4 indicates at least 3 voluntary excursions. If eyes are closed, the examiner should open them and examine tracking of a finger or object. Tracking with the opening of 1 eyelid will suffice in cases of eyelid edema or facial trauma. If tracking is absent horizontally, examine vertical tracking. Alternatively, 2 blinks on command should be documented. This will recognize a locked-in syndrome (patient is fully aware). A score of E3 indicates the absence of voluntary tracking with open eyes. A score of E2 indicates eyelids opening to loud voice. A score of E1 indicates eyelids open to pain stimulus. A score of E0 indicates no eyelids opening to pain.

Motor response (M)
Grade the best possible response of the arms. A score of M4 indicates that the patient demonstrated at least 1 of 3 hand positions (thumbs-up, fist, or peace sign) with either hand. A score of M3 indicates that the patient touched the examiner's hand after a painful stimulus compressing the temporomandibular joint or supraorbital nerve (localization). A score of M2 indicates any flexion movement of the upper limbs. A score of M1 indicates extensor posturing. A score of M0 indicates no motor response or myoclonus status epilepticus.

Brainstem reflexes (B)
Grade the best possible response. Examine pupillary and corneal reflexes. Preferably, corneal reflexes are tested by instilling 2-3 drops of sterile saline on the cornea from a distance of 4-6 inches (this minimizes corneal trauma from repeated examinations). Cotton swabs can also be used. The cough reflex to tracheal suctioning is tested only when both of these reflexes are absent. A score of B4 indicates pupill and corneal reflexes are present. A score of B3 indicates one pupil wide and fixed. A score of B2 indicates both pupils are wide and fixed. A score of B1 indicates both pupil and corneal reflexes are absent and a score of B0 indicates pupill, cornea and cough reflex (using tracheal suctioning) are absent.

Respiration (R)
Determine spontaneous breathing pattern in a nonintubated patient, and grade simply as regular R4, irregular R2, or Cheyne-Stokes R3 breathing. In mechanically ventilated patients, assess the pressure waveform of spontaneous respiratory pattern or the patient triggering of the ventilator R1. The ventilator monitor displaying respiratory patterns is used to identify the patient generated breaths on the ventilator. No adjustments are made to the ventilator while the patient is graded, but grading is done preferably with FiO2 within normal limits. A standard apnea (oxygen-diffusion) test may be needed when patient breathes at ventilator rate R0.

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