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Medication Safety

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Outline

- Discuss the effects of medication errors
- Identify common medication errors/sentinel events
- Discuss common unapproved abbreviations
- Identify sound-alike-look-alike-drugs
- Describe methods to prevent medication errors

Common Medication Errors

- Wrong patient
 - Example:
 - 2 patients with same last name in neighboring rooms
 - Same medication, different doses
- Wrong dose

Common Medication Errors

- Wrong route
 - Example:
 - Assuming a medication is given as an intravenous (IV) injection, since it is mostly used for IVs, when it was supposed to be an intramuscular (IM) injection
- Wrong time/omission
 - Example:
 - Giving a medication in the A.M. instead of P.M.
- Wrong medication

Common

- Poor handwriting
- Communication failure
- Improper medication selection
- Fatigue
- Workload
- Inexperience
- System flaws
- Sound-alike-look-alike drugs
- Unapproved abbreviations
- Shortcuts
- Labeling errors
- Storage (different strengths/doses in the same vial stored in the same location)

Common Causes of Medication Errors

- Poor handwriting
 - Seek clarification from healthcare provider if handwriting is illegible
- Communication failure
 - Example:
 - Not understanding a medication order

Common Causes of Medication Errors

- Improper medication selection
 - Example:
 - Selecting/overriding a wrong medication from the database system
 - Ordering the wrong medication
- Fatigue

Common Causes of Medication Errors

- Workload
 - Example:
 - Multiple patients and multiple medication orders
 - A nurse, covering for another nurse who had to work a different area, scans medications from patient charts rather than the patients armbands
 - Patient has allergic reaction to wrong medication, due to nurse not checking for allergies to medications

Common Causes of Medication Errors

- Inexperience
 - Example:
 - Working in another unit the nurse is not familiar with
 - Different uses for a medication
- System flaws
 - Medication being ordered for a patient that was not ordered by healthcare staff due to a system flaw
- Sound-alike-look-alike drugs (SALAD)
- Unapproved abbreviations

Common Causes of Medication Errors

- Shortcuts
 - Overriding a “guardrail” to set a rate in the system
 - Not waiting for pharmacy to put in an order
- Labeling errors
 - Short-staffed pharmacy might grab wrong dose
- Storage
 - Different strengths/doses in the same vial stored in the same location

Effects of Medication Errors

- There can be many effects of medication error on a patient and healthcare provider
- A near-miss can occur – not actually administering the wrong medication, however the protocol leading up to the near-miss is an error in itself

Effects of Medication Errors

- Disability
- Death
- Mistrust
- Low patient satisfaction scores
- Lack of confidence in the healthcare provider

Unapproved Abbreviations by Joint Commission

- U (for unit)
- IU (for international unit)
- QD (for daily)
- QOD (for every other day)
- 5.0 (trailing zero)
- .5 (lack of leading zero)
- MS (for morphine sulfate)
- MgSO₄ (for magnesium sulfate)

Institute for Safe Medication Practice (ISMP) Error-Prone Abbreviations

- Strongly recommended not to use these abbreviations
- Includes do-not-use medication abbreviations

<https://www.ismp.org/recommendations/error-prone-abbreviations-list>

Institute for Safe Medication Practice (ISMP) Error-Prone Abbreviations

- Examples include:
 - μg (for microgram)
 - SQ (for subcutaneous)
 - SS (for sliding scale)

<https://www.ismp.org/recommendations/error-prone-abbreviations-list>

Institute for Safe Medication Practice (ISMP) Error-Prone Abbreviations

- Examples include:
 - AD (for right eye)
 - 100mg (with no space – the M is sometimes mistaken for an additional zero)
 - @ (mistaken as a 2)
 - + (mistaken as a 4)

<https://www.ismp.org/recommendations/error-prone-abbreviations-list>

Sound-Alike-Look-Alike-Drugs (SALAD)

- Bupropion – Buspirone
- Dopamine – Dobutamine
- Glipizide – Glyburide
- Prednisolone – Prednisone
- Vincristine – Vinblastine
- Doxorubicin – Daunorubicin
- Hydralazine – Hydroxyzine – Hydromorphone

Methods of Preventing Medication Errors

- Joint Commission's list of approved abbreviations
- ISMP list of recommended abbreviations
- Medication safety workstations/vests
- Scanning armbands
- Following safety checks
 - Avoid overriding, unless in an emergency

Methods of Preventing Medication Errors

- No shortcuts
- Prepare medications at the bedside (open at the bedside)
- Double check allergies
- When in doubt, clarify
- Tall man lettering
 - Prednisolone – predni**SONE**
 - Glyburide – glipi**ZIDE**

References

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Medication Safety

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