
Look-Alike/Sound-Alike Medications

I. Purpose

This policy is intended to reduce medication errors with drugs that have look-alike and/or sound-alike (LA/SA) medication names.

II. Scope

This policy applies to (i) Ochsner Health, (ii) Ochsner Clinic Foundation, and/or (iii) all facilities and entities wholly-owned and/or leased by Ochsner Clinic Foundation ("Ochsner").

III. Definitions

A. Categories of LA/SA Medications-

1. Similar packaging (vial size, label color, unit dose packaging).
2. Similar medication name (looks similar when typed or written, sounds similar when spoken).

B. Tall Man Lettering – Look-alike medication names are modified in the computer using tall man lettering (mixed case) letters to help draw attention to the dissimilarities in their names.

C. Patient Care Areas – includes hospitals and clinics and infusion centers.

D. DEERS – Drug Error Reducing Software – software used for library development in infusion pump devices

IV. Policy Statements

- A. A list of LA/SA medications which may lead to potentially harmful medications errors shall be established, reviewed annually, updated, and approved at System Pharmacy and Therapeutics (P&T) Committee.
- B. The LA/SA lists (see attachments) will be updated based upon review of medication errors, national resources (e.g. ISMP list in references), and the recommendations of the System Medication Safety Committees.
- C. Staff in patient care areas must follow specific safety strategies to reduce medication errors due to drugs that LA/SA.
- D. Staff in patient care areas must maintain awareness to the LA/SA medication lists.

V. Procedures/Standards and Roles & Responsibilities

Look-Alike/Sound-Alike Medications

- A. Store LA/SA medications in separate locations in the pharmacy, if space available (carousel, IV room, etc.) and in automated dispense cabinet (ADC) in hospital departments, or other medication storage areas.
- B. Distinguish non-automated device and/or non-barcoded storage bins/areas by a LA/SA sticker.
- C. LA/SA Clinical Data Categories will be created at a system level and placed in each ADC to alert personnel to LA/SA medications.
- D. Tall Man Lettering will be utilized for look-alike medications in the electronic health record (EHR), ADC, inventory management software, DERS and medication labels.
- E. Identified medication errors, near-miss errors or potential errors involving LA/SA medications will be reported and tracked in the hospital Occurrence Reporting System and reviewed for list inclusion.

VI. Enforcement and Exceptions

- A. Request for exceptions to this policy must be submitted to the Director of Pharmacy or local pharmacy designee and MUST:
 - 1. Describe the reason for requesting the exception.
 - 2. Describe the specific impact on the Covered Individual and the Company.
 - 3. Describe the specific impact on the Covered Individual if the request is denied.
- B. Prior to approval of any exception request, Covered Individuals will continue to comply with this policy.
- C. Failure to comply with this policy may result in progressive disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment for employees or termination of contract or service for third-party personnel, students, or volunteers.

VII. Internal References

- Attachment A: Look-Alike/Sound-Alike Medication List - Inpatient Departments of the Hospital
- Attachment B: Look-Alike/Sound-Alike Medication List – Outpatient Departments of the Hospital
- Attachment C: Look-Alike/Sound-Alike Medication List – Pharmacies with Infusion Centers

VIII. External References



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Policy Owner(s)	Pharmacy

Look-Alike/Sound-Alike Medications

Institute for Safe Medication Practices (ISMP). *ISMP List of Confused Drug Names*. ISMP; 2023.

The Joint Commission, Standard MM.01.02.01 Safe Use of Look-alike/sound a-like Medications

SANTELL jp, Cousins DD. Medication Errors Related to Product Names. Joint Commission J Qual Pt. Safety 2005; 31:649-54

JCAHO. Sentinel Event Alert. Issue 19-May 2001

IX. Policy History

OMC.PI.004- Look Alike Sound Alike Drugs

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