

Look Alike Sound Alike Medication Errors

In response to JCAHO's recommendations for health care organizations to review their policies and procedures regarding medication use to reduce the high potential for error from look-alike and sound-alike (LA/SA) drugs, the Pharmacy Benefits Management Strategic Healthcare Group-Medical Advisory Panel (PBM-MAP) has undertaken initiatives to review LA/SA errors nationally within the VA system.

Evaluation and Validation of Look Alike and Sound Alike Medication Error within the VA System Using Computerized Prescription Data: A Pilot Project

PBM-MAP Ez-Minutes; July-September 2004; Volume 2, Issue 3: pages 5-6.

<http://vawww.pbm.med.va.gov/ezminutes/Ez-MinutesVol2Iss3July-Sept041.pdf>

Look Alike Sound Alike Error Risk Potential for National Review of New Molecular Entities (NME)

- In response to JCAHO recommendation
- Recently added to NME monograph
- Pilot evaluation
 - Multi-attribute drug product search engine queried for similar drug names based on spelling and phonetic similarities
 - Program also searches for similarities in dosage form, strength, and route of administration

- Steps involved in determining error risk potential for monograph authors:
 - Submit name of NME to PBM
 - LA/SA analysis conducted by PBM
 - Brand and generic names identified
 - Will be forwarded to the clinician preparing the monograph by the PBM
 - Clinical judgment to determine:
 - Severity – based on Safety Assessment Code (SAC) from the VHA Safety Handbook
 - **Catastrophic** - Death or major permanent loss of function (sensory, motor, physiologic, or intellectual) *not related to the natural course of the patient's illness or underlying condition*
 - **Major** - Permanent **lessening** of bodily functioning (sensory, motor, physiologic, or intellectual) *not related to the natural course of the patient's illness or underlying conditions*
 - **Moderate** - Increased length of stay **or** increased level of care
 - **Minor** - No injury, nor increased length of stay nor increased level of care
 - Probability of occurrence also based on the VHA Safety Handbook:

- **Frequent** – Likely to occur immediately or within a short period (may happen several times in 1 year).
- **Occasional** – Probably will occur (may happen several times in 1 to 2 years).
- **Uncommon** – Possible to occur (may happen sometime in 2 to 5 years).
- **Remote** – Unlikely to occur (may happen sometime in 5 to 30 years).
- Review of monograph contents by multiple disciplines:
 - Subject matter experts
 - MAP Committee
 - VISN Formulary Leaders (VFLs) Committee
- Presentation to both MAP and VFLs Committees for approval
- Final document is posted on the website

Additional Resources for Look Alike Sound Alike Drug Names

Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO)
 2005 Hospitals' National Patient Safety Goal
http://www.jcaho.org/accredited+organizations/patient+safety/05+npsg/05_npsg_hap.htm

JCAHO National Patient Safety Goals
 Look Alike, Sound Alike Drug List for Potentially Problematic Drug Names
<http://www.jcaho.org/accredited+organizations/patient+safety/05+npsg/lasa.pdf>

JCAHO Sentinel Event Alert; Issue 19; May 2001
 Look Alike, Sound Alike Drug Names
http://www.jcaho.org/about+us/news+letters/sentinel+event+alert/sea_19.htm

USP Quality Review; April 2004; No. 79
 Similar Names Reported to MEDMARX and the USP Medication Errors Reporting (MER) Program
<http://www.usp.org/pdf/patientSafety/qr792004-04-01.pdf>