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985 Damonte Ranch Pkwy, Ste 206 • Reno, NV 89521 • Phone: 775/850-1440 • Fax: 775/850-1444
http://bop.nv.gov

Board Members

Electronic Prescribing Mandate for Controlled Substances

By Courtney Lee, General Counsel

In the 2019 legislative session, Assembly Bill 310, enacted as Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) 639.23535, was signed into law. Effective January 1, 2021, all controlled substance (CS) prescriptions **must** be given to a pharmacy by electronic prescribing (e-prescribing). There are certain exceptions to the e-prescribing mandate. NRS 639.23535 provides in part as follows:

1. Except as otherwise provided in this subsection and except as otherwise provided by regulations adopted by the Board, a prescription for a controlled substance must be given to a pharmacy by electronic transmission in accordance with the regulations adopted by the Board. The requirements of this subsection **do not** apply to a prescription:
   (a) Issued by a veterinarian;
   (b) Issued under circumstances prescribed by regulation of the Board where:
      (1) Electronic transmission is unavailable due to technologic or electronic failure; or
      (2) The drug will be dispensed at a pharmacy located outside of this State;
   (c) Issued by a practitioner who will also dispense the drug;
   (d) That includes, without limitation, information that is not supported by the program for electronically transmitting prescriptions prescribed by the National Council for Prescription Drug Programs or its successor organization or, if that entity ceases to exist, a program designated by the Board;
   (e) For which electronic prescribing is prohibited by federal law;
   (f) That is not issued for a specific patient;
   (g) Issued pursuant to a protocol for research;
   (h) Issued by a practitioner who has received a waiver from the Board pursuant to subsection 2; or
   (i) Issued under circumstances in which the practitioner determines that:
      (1) The patient is unable to obtain the drug in a timely manner if the prescription is given by electronic transmission; and
      (2) Delay will adversely affect the patient's medical condition. (emphasis added)

NRS 639.23535 (2) gives the Nevada State Board of Pharmacy the authority to promulgate regulations to provide other exemptions. The Board passed regulation LCB File No. R083-20 to exempt a practitioner from the e-prescribing mandate for one year, until December 31, 2021, if the practitioner claims economic hardship, technological limitations beyond the control of the practitioner, or other exceptional circumstances. In order to claim the exemption, the practitioner must complete the exemption form provided by the Board and maintain it

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NABPF
National Association of Boards of Pharmacy Foundation

Guidelines, Materials Available to Health Care Providers for Safely Administering COVID-19 Vaccines

Guidelines and materials are available to support health care providers with safely administering the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) vaccine, including safe practice recommendations from the Institute for Safe Medication Practices (ISMP) and a United States Pharmacopeia (USP) toolkit.

After numerous reports of errors or hazards associated with the administration of COVID-19 vaccines, ISMP is sharing safe practice recommendations.

A new USP toolkit is also available to facilitate operational efficiencies that can help accelerate delivery and support safe handling of COVID-19 vaccines while maintaining quality and ultimately the public's trust. Download the USP toolkit.

FDA Issues Guidance to Protect Consumers From Methanol Poisoning

Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has issued guidance for industry, *Policy for Testing of Alcohol (Ethanol) and Isopropyl Alcohol for Methanol, Including During the Public Health Emergency (COVID-19).* The guidance is intended to help pharmaceutical manufacturers and pharmacists who engage in drug compounding to avoid using pharmaceutical alcohol contaminated with or substituted with methanol in drug products. FDA noted that methanol is not an acceptable ingredient for any drug product and should not be used. The guidance is available on the FDA website.

Standardize Concentrations for Oral Liquid Preparations

ISMP Institute for Safe Medication Practices An ECRI Affiliate

This column was prepared by ISMP, an ECRI affiliate. Have you experienced a medication error or close call? Report such incidents in confidence to ISMP's National Medication Errors Reporting Program online at www.ismp.org *or by email to ismpinfo@ismp.org to activate an alert system that reaches manufacturers, the medical community, and FDA. To read more about the risk reduction strategies that you can put into practice today, subscribe to the ISMP Medication Safety Alert! newsletters at* www.ismp.org.

Few would disagree that standardizing the concentrations of drugs has enormous potential for increasing safety, especially in pediatric care. Standardization limits the risk of variation, especially when patients are transitioned from hospital to home or have prescriptions filled at different pharmacies. However, ISMP has learned of multiple instances in which unrecognized differences or changes in drug concentrations led to confusion and dosing errors.

In one example, a patient was prescribed hydroxyurea, an antineoplastic agent. The community pharmacy compounded a 50 mg/mL suspension for the patient with instructions to take 13 mL (650 mg) for each dose. When the patient was later admitted to the hospital, the inpatient pharmacy prepared their standard concentration of 100 mg/mL, but the same dose volume of 13 mL was ordered. As a result, the patient received doses of 1,300 mg for several days before the error was recognized. It is unclear why the community pharmacy prepared a 50 mg/mL concentration. Perhaps the prescriber ordered that concentration or that was the concentration with which the pharmacist was most familiar.

Similar concentration mix-ups have been reported in literature. In one case, the oral class 1c antiarrhythmic medication flecainide was involved. The parents of a nine-month-old infant were told to increase the child's dose volume of flecainide to 4 mL, assuming the concentration was 5 mg/mL as in the original prescription.[1] However, the parents refilled the prescription at a different pharmacy and received the drug in a 20 mg/mL concentration. The patient received 80 mg/4 mL, a fourfold overdose, resulting in wide complex tachycardia and QRS prolongation.

There have been efforts, including those by a collaborative led by the University of Michigan[2]and the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP)[3], to publish lists of consensuses and literature-based standard concentrations. In fact, for the medications involved in the cases above, both the University of Michigan and ASHP standard recommendations are in alignment – hydroxyurea 100 mg/mL and flecainide 20 mg/mL. However, the outreach and communication of these standardization efforts do not appear to be reaching prescribers and pharmacists. Both inpatient and outpatient practitioners need to get on the same set of standard concentrations for compounded oral liquids. It is imperative that both medical and pharmacy professional organizations develop and implement effective strategies to reach and influence practitioners to use the published standard concentrations. ISMP urges prescribers and pharmacists to review the University of Michigan and

ASHP lists and consider adopting the proposed standard concentrations. Your efforts can help reduce the risk of medication errors.

It is also important for pharmacists to provide patients or caregivers with appropriately sized metric-only dosing devices (eg, oral syringes) to measure and administer doses. Label directions for patients and caregivers should include the dose in terms of mL (not teaspoonfuls), matching the dosing device. The community pharmacy label should also include the concentration next to the drug name. To be sure patients or caregivers are able to use the dosing device and measure the proper dose, use the teach-back method to demonstrate how to measure and administer prescribed amounts. This also gives pharmacists, patients, and caregivers an opportunity to catch an error.

References

1. Wang GS, Tham E, Maes J, et al. Flecainide toxicity in a pediatric patient due to differences in pharmacy compounding. Int J Cardiol. 2012;161(3):178-9.
2. *www.mipedscompounds.org/*
3. *www.ashp.org/-/media/assets/pharmacy-practice/s4s/docs/Compound-Oral-Liquid.ashx*

Opioid Use Disorder Educational Programs, Resources Available for Pharmacists

Through its Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) Education Program, the College of Psychiatric and Neurologic Pharmacists (CPNP) provides educational programs and resources that can help pharmacists during the ongoing opioid epidemic. These educational opportunities include Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education-approved, on-demand programs covering subjects such as pharmacotherapy for OUD, comorbid disorders, and chronic pain and OUD. Toolkits and guides are available to assist pharmacists in the areas of intervention, medication management, and naloxone access.

These educational materials and resources can be accessed through the CPNP website.

National Diabetes Prevention Program – How Pharmacists Can Get Involved

Pharmacists can play a key role in preventing type 2 diabetes by helping to expand the reach of the National Diabetes Prevention Program (National DPP) – a program led by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that makes it easier for patients with prediabetes or who are at risk for type 2 diabetes to participate in evidence-based lifestyle changing programs to reduce their risk and improve overall health. CDC offers an action guide for community pharmacists that outlines ways pharmacies can raise awareness of prediabetes. The National DPP is a partnership among private and public organizations to screen and test for prediabetes and refer people with prediabetes to a CDC-recognized lifestyle change program participating in the National DPP, and deliver the National DPP lifestyle change program. More information about how pharmacists can participate is available on the CDC website.

Surgery Patients Receive More Opioids in the US Than in Other Countries

Patients in the US are prescribed a disproportionally higher number of opioids after surgeries compared to surgery patients in other countries, according to a new study. The study, published in the *Journal of the American College of Surgeons,* reviewed data from 2,024 surgery patients and found that 83% of US patients without pain were prescribed opioids, compared with 8.7% of non-US patients without pain. The authors concluded that US patients are prescribed more amounts of opioids at higher rates regardless of the severeness of their post-surgical pain. The authors recommend that more efforts are made toward ensuring that opioid prescriptions are tailored to patients' needs.

The full text of the study can be accessed by visting *www.journalacs.org/article/S1072-7515(20)32336-X/fulltext.*

Study Finds 94% Drop in Symptomatic COVID-19 Cases With Pfizer's Vaccine

A study by Israel's largest health care provider, health maintenance organization Clalit, reported that there is a 94% drop in symptomatic COVID-19 cases with the Pfizer vaccine. The study represents 600,000 people who received two doses of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine in Israel. Clalit, which covers more than half of all Israelis, noted the same group who received the COVID-19 vaccine doses was also 92% less likely to develop serious illness from the virus. The study compared the vaccine recipient group to another group of the same size and medical history who had not received the vaccines. Read the full study here.

NABP Executive Director/Secretary Addresses Pharmacists' Involvement in COVID-19 Vaccination During FIP Webinar

NABP Executive Director/Secretary Lemrey "Al" Carter, PharmD, MS, RPh, presented during the International Pharmaceutical Federation's (FIP's) Regulators' Forum on pharmacists' involvement with COVID-19 vaccination on February 4, 2021. The webinar addressed a new regulatory vaccination preparedness self-assessment tool and risk assessment, the expanded roles for pharmacists, and data FIP has collected on vaccinations by pharmacists. View the webinar here.

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in a retrievable manner. The exemption form is available on the Board website at *https://bop.nv.gov.*

The pharmacist is not responsible for enforcing the e-prescribing mandate or verifying that a non-e-prescribed prescription meets one of the exemptions listed. However, if the pharmacist believes that a particular practitioner is unlawfully claiming an exemption from the e-prescribing mandate and is issuing a CS prescription by means other than e-prescribing, then they may contact the Board to investigate the matter. Violations of NRS 639.23535 may result in certain penalties and/or discipline. See NRS 639.23535(5) and (6). For more information, see frequently asked questions.

Practitioners and pharmacists should work together to ensure the accuracy and proper transmission of prescribed CS, and to protect Nevada's public. Because certain exceptions exist to the e-prescribing mandate for CS, practitioners and pharmacists should be aware of the exceptions or claimed exemption(s) and collaborate to fill lawful prescriptions – whether e-prescribed, written, or other acceptable transmission of a CS prescription – per NRS 639.23535(1) and (2).

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J. David "Dave" Wuest, RPh - State News Editor

Lemrey "Al" Carter, PharmD, MS, RPh - National News Editor & Executive Editor

Amy Sanchez - Publications and Editorial Manager