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PURPOSE

To promote patient safety and minimize risk by ensuring an opioid review is completed prior to medication dispensing for LTC residents on two or more regularly scheduled opioids.

POLICY

Long Term Care (LTC) residents that are concurrently on two or more opioids will have an opioid safety review completed by the pharmacy service team.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- 1) Opioid safety requires the entire multidisciplinary team. Prescribers, pharmacists and nursing all play a key role in ensuring opioid appropriateness and identification of opioid risk for LTC residents.
- 2) Verifying medication appropriateness before dispensing is a Standard of Practice for pharmacists. This document focuses on the opioid safety review being completed by the pharmacy team.
- 3) Opioids are high alert medications that bear a heightened safety risk of causing significant patient harm if they are used in error.
 - a. High Alert Medications may require targeted safeguards to mitigate error potential.
- 4) Polypharmacy with multiple opioids may increase the risk of overdose.
- 5) Transfer of information at resident transitions is a significant risk point for medication errors to occur and therefore is an opportunity to identify potential errors.
- 6) There is limited evidence to support the concurrent use of multiple opioids.
- 7) The Pharmacy and Therapeutics committee recognize there are many complexities involved in completing an opioid safety review and it may not be possible to verify all aspects.

PROCEDURE

For LTC residents with medication orders for two or more regularly scheduled narcotics, the clinical pharmacists will:

1. **Provide verification of the opioid prescriptions including identification of previous opioid use and potential safety risks prior to dispensing.**
 - A. Practice Points to consider for order verification and safety review.
 - Consult transfer information to identify if ongoing use of two regularly scheduled opioids is intentional and supported

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- Identification of prescriber for each opioid medication
 - a. Confirmation that the prescribers involved are aware of the other opioid medication orders
 - Rationale for the combination of opioids
 - Involvement of pain consult service
 - Evidence of compliant use of combination opioid medications together for an appropriate duration of time prior to admission.
 - Start-date/initiation information for each opioid
 - Dosing concerns
 - Clarification of aberrant or unusual use
 - Consideration of pain or related symptoms as adverse drug reactions to a concurrent medication(s)
 - Consultation with previous care provider(s) for clarifications as needed
- B. Consult with the on-site clinical pharmacist or prescriber for resolution of identified safety risks or concerns.
- C. Notify site nursing staff by phone and in writing of any risk concerns, refusal to fill, and new or changed orders. Clear communication will dissuade inadvertent administration of stock or other supply of opioid medication.
- D. Identify individual accountable for follow-up as necessary.
- 2. Review the appropriateness of ongoing use of two or more opioids for the LTC resident.**
- A. Assess the resident specific characteristics, status, diagnosis, indications, medication response and risks. Determine if there is continued need for the combination of opioids.
- i. If possible, effort should be made to reduce to one regularly scheduled opioid medication.
- 3. Activities related to opioid safety and appropriateness are documented in the client record.**
- a. The dispensary clinical pharmacist will at a minimum document supporting information in the pharmacy's patient record of care (electronic or written) and in the LTC's resident record if access is permitted.
 - b. The on-site clinical pharmacist will at a minimum document supporting information in the LTC's resident record.

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REFERENCES

ISMP List of High-Alert Medications in Acute Care Settings:

<http://www.ismp.org/Tools/highalertmedications.pdf>

Canadian Guideline for Safe and Effective use of Opioids for Chronic Non-Cancer Pain

http://nationalpaincentre.mcmaster.ca/documents/opioid_guideline_part_b_v5_6.pdf

Alberta College of Pharmacists Standards or Practice for Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians

<https://pharmacists.ab.ca/sites/default/files/StandardsOfPractice.pdf>

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