

Appendix B. Categories of Medication Errors

Medication Administration Errors

Omission Error. The failure to administer an ordered dose to a resident by the time the next dose is due, assuming there has been no prescribing error. Exceptions would include a resident's refusal to take the medication and failure to administer the dose because of recognized contraindications.

Unauthorized Drug Error. The administration of a medication to a resident for which the physician did not write an order. This category includes a dose given to the wrong resident, dose given that was not ordered, administration of the wrong drug or a discontinued drug, and doses given outside a stated set of clinical parameters or protocols.

Extra Dose Error. The administration of duplicate doses to a resident or administration of one or more dosage units in addition to those that were ordered. May include administration of a medication dose after the order was discontinued (which could also be considered an Unauthorized Drug Error).

Wrong Dose Error. When the resident receives an amount of medication that is greater than or less than the amount ordered by the prescriber.

Wrong Route Error. The administration of a medication to a resident by a route other than that ordered by the physician or doses administered via the correct route but at the wrong site (e.g., left eye instead of right eye).

Wrong Rate Error. The incorrect rate of administration of a medication to a resident. May occur with intravenous fluids or liquid enteral products.

Wrong Dosage Form Error. The administration of a medication in a dosage form different from the one that was ordered by the prescriber. This could include crushing a tablet prior to administration without an order from the prescriber.

Wrong Time Error. The failure to administer a medication to a resident within a predefined interval from its scheduled administration time. This interval should be established by each facility and clearly stated in the facility's policies. Different intervals may be established for different drugs or drug classes, based on the therapeutic importance of dosing.

Wrong Drug Preparation Error. A medication incorrectly formulated or manipulated before administration, such as incorrect or inaccurate dilution or reconstitution, failure to shake suspensions, crushing medications that should not be crushed, mixing drugs that are physically or chemically incompatible, and inadequate product packaging.

Wrong Administration Technique Error. Use of an inappropriate procedure or improper technique in the administration of a drug. Examples of wrong technique errors include incorrect manipulation of inhalers, failure to maintain sanitary technique with medications, not wiping an injection site with alcohol, failure to use proper technique when crushing medications, failure to check nasogastric tube placement or flushing NG tube before and after administration of medication, failure to wash hands or improper hand washing technique used.

Deteriorated Drug Error. Administration of a medication when the physical or chemical integrity of the dosage form has been compromised, such as expired medications, medications not properly stored, or medications requiring refrigeration that are left out at room temperature.

Additional Types of Medication Errors

Prescribing Error. The inappropriate selection of a drug (based on indication, contraindications, known allergies, existing drug therapy, and other factors); dose; dosage form; quantity; route of administration; concentration; rate of administration; or