



JDJ CONSULTING, LLC

## Enhancing your medication safety program

I think the biggest area towards enhancing medication safety is identifying drugs that can have dangerous effects if given incorrectly. We call these “high alert” medications. You should have a list posted in all drug storage areas of those drugs on your formulary along with the safety strategies you have in place. You’re accrediting agency is focusing very heavily on this high alert, drug list and how you manage these medications and the strategies you choose. It does not necessarily need labeling everything but a strategy for enhancing the safety of these medications. A master list can be found at [ismp.org](http://ismp.org).

I’d like to talk about specific safety strategies with two medications. The first is IV phenylephrine found on the anesthesia carts and sometimes in your crash cart. The vial is 100 times more potent than the dose that’s needed to be administered. If it was given undiluted it could be fatal. I’ve been recommending a simple step a secondary container that must be accessed possibly with a lid to prevent from inadvertent preparation of the drug. A simple specimen cup labeled caution Phenylephrine placed on the anesthesia cart, avoids this mistake from happening.

The second drug is IV Phenergan (promethazine) often use a second line agent for postop nausea and vomiting in the recovery room. ISMP has reports that patients have experienced extreme harm even loss of limbs when this medication is given as an IV push. They recommend healthcare facilities around the country strongly consider eliminating it from their formulary. You should have this discussion with your anesthesia providers to determine if other options are available. They may want to consider adding IV droperidol which is an excellent drug in small doses to treat refractory PONV in the recovery room.

IF PROMETHAZINE remains on formulary and it can’t be eliminated, then labeling of the bins in the locations with large lettering “administer IM only” should be implemented.

I’ll have further safety strategies in newsletters to come. We’d love to hear from you on what you’ve done to enhance your safety program.

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