County of Los Angeles   **Department of Health Services**

OLIVE VIEW-UCLA MEDICAL CENTER
POLICY & PROCEDURE

NUMBER: 241
VERSION: 4

SUBJECT/TITLE: **LOOK-ALIKE AND SOUND-ALIKE MEDICATIONS AND PATIENT SAFETY**

POLICY: Olive View-UCLA Medical Center takes a multidisciplinary approach to minimize problems associated with medication labeling, packaging or products with similar sounding names.

PURPOSE: To identify "look-alike/sound-alike" medications to ensure patient safety as required by regulatory agencies.

DEPARTMENTS: All

DEFINITIONS: <u>**"Look-Alike"**</u> medications are defined as drugs with similar appearance or packaging (e.g., similar tablet appearance, similar vial size and label color, similar unit dose packaging, or similar I.V. solution packaging and labeling) that may contribute to medication errors.

<u>**"Sound-Alike"**</u> medications are defined as drugs with names that sound similar, and so are confused in verbal or written communications.

PROCEDURE: 1. An Olive View-UCLA Medical Center-specific list of look-alike/sound-alike drugs is prepared for distribution in the facility.

   a. <u>PI Pharmacist</u>
       The PI pharmacist reviews look-alike/sound-alike medications and high-risk medications from facility medication events for presentation and review at the Medication Safety Committee.

   b. <u>Medication Safety Committee</u>
       The Medication Safety Committee reviews the look-alike/sound-alike facility list annually and considers medication error data, national resource data and new formulary admissions for revisions of the Olive View-UCLA facility list. Recommendations are forwarded to Pharmacy & Therapeutics Committee.

   c. The facility look-alike/sound-alike list is posted on the Intranet and distributed to the pharmacy and patient care areas (See "Attachment").

   2. Storage and Labeling

   a. Pyxis and pharmacy containers containing medications identified on the

facility look-alike/sound-alike list will be labeled with bright colored "look-alike/sound alike drug" stickers and separated whenever possible. Since individual Pyxis cubies allow selective access to medications, drug separation is not an issue these storage bins.

b. Pharmacy staff will be responsible to label and separate medications in the pharmacy area.

c. "Tall Man" characters are used in the facility's electronic health record to differentiate "sound-alike" drugs. The Orchid pharmacy team updates the system periodically using national sources. "Tall-Man" characters appear on the Pyxis MedStations, medication labels and on the *Medication Administration Records* (MARs) to help the nurses distinguish between drugs with similar names.

3. **Medication Error Monitoring**

a. Actual and potential medication errors involving look-alike/sound-alike drugs are reviewed and evaluated at the Medication Safety Committee for appropriate follow-up recommendations.

4. **Medication Formulary Additions**

a. The potential for look-alike/sound-alike errors will be considered at the time of facility medication formulary addition considerations.

5. **Medication Prescribing**

a. Poor handwriting has contributed to errors involving similar looking drug names. Pharmacists are required to contact the prescribing physician to clarify all orders not clearly written. To reduce potential errors due to poor handwriting, electronic prescribing of medications is preferred, when available.

References:	
The Joint Commission E-dition Standards, 2014	
The Joint Commission E-dition Standards, Release 3.5, 2011	
Preventing Medication Errors: Strategies for Pharmacists, JCAHO, 2001	
Approved by: Judith Maass (Chief Executive Officer), Rima Matevosian (Chief Medical Officer)	Date: 06/01/2020
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