HealthStream Regulatory Script

Medication Terminology: Use of Abbreviations & Symbols
Version: May 2008

Lesson 1: Introduction
Lesson 2: Recommendations
Welcome to the introductory lesson on medication terminology.

As your partner, HealthStream strives to provide its customers with excellence in regulatory learning solutions. As new guidelines are continually issued by regulatory agencies, we work to update courses, as needed, in a timely manner. Since responsibility for complying with new guidelines remains with your organization, HealthStream encourages you to routinely check all relevant regulatory agencies directly for the latest updates for clinical/organizational guidelines.

If you have concerns about any aspect of the safety or quality of patient care in your organization, be aware that you may report these concerns directly to The Joint Commission.
# Course Rationale

This course will help you and your facility improve patient safety.

You will learn about:
- "Risky" [glossary] drug terms
- Safer terms to use instead

![Image: 1002.jpg]
### Course Goals

After completing this course, you should be able to:

- Identify The Joint Commission recommendations related to risky drug terms
- Recognize risky abbreviations and symbols
- Select safer terms to use in place of risky terms
## Course Outline

This lesson gave the course rationale and goals.

Lesson 2 gives recommendations for the use of written drug terms.

**FLASH ANIMATION: Course Map**

Lesson 1: Introduction
Lesson 2: Recommendations
- The Joint Commission recommendations
- Why certain terms can be risky
- Which terms should be prohibited
Welcome to the lesson on recommendations for the use of drug terms.

After completing this lesson, you should be able to:
- Identify The Joint Commission recommendations related to risky drug terms
- Recognize risky abbreviations and symbols
- Select safer terms to use in place of risky terms

Lesson 2: Recommendations
- The Joint Commission recommendations
- Why certain terms can be risky
- Which terms should be prohibited
The Joint Commission recognizes the importance of using safe drug terms.

In the 2008 National Patient Safety Goals (NPSGs), The Joint Commission recommends:
- Each facility should identify and prohibit certain risky abbreviations, acronyms [glossary], and symbols.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2003</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Risky Terms: Problems (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why is it so important for facilities to prohibit risky terms?</th>
<th>NO IMAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Let's take a look on the following screen.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abbreviations and symbols can cause drug errors. For example, when a doctor writes a drug order, he or she may use the term “U” (for “unit”).

A nurse reading the order might mistake the “U” for:
- “0” (zero)
- “4” (four)
- “cc” (cubic centimeter)

This could lead to confusion. Treatment may be delayed while the nurse checks the order.

Even worse, the nurse might not check the order. He or she may misread the order and give the wrong dose. This could cause serious patient injury or death.
### Risky Terms: Prohibited List (1)

In short: Certain terms can lead to serious drug errors. Therefore, The Joint Commission recommends that each healthcare facility should:

1. Identify the abbreviations, acronyms, and symbols that staff members use commonly
2. Review the list of common terms
3. Identify terms on the list that might be confusing.
4. Place confusing terms on a “risky” list
Finally, each facility must prohibit the use of certain terms from the risky list. These terms must not be used on any type of written record. This includes:
- Any type of written order
- Progress notes
- Consultation reports
- Operative reports
Risky Terms: Which Terms? (1)

Which terms must be prohibited?
Let's take a look on the following screen.
Facilities may prohibit any terms from their risky list. However, certain terms **must** be prohibited.

A table of these terms appears on the following screen.

Note: In the following table, terms appear in one form (upper case, with periods between letters). Be aware that any prohibited term is prohibited in all forms:

- Upper case
- Lower case
- With periods
- Without periods

---

**Ask your supervisor for the complete list of prohibited terms at YOUR facility!**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>This prohibited term...</th>
<th>Is used to mean...</th>
<th>But could be mistaken for...</th>
<th>Therefore, this term should be written instead:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U</td>
<td>Unit</td>
<td>- 0 (zero)</td>
<td>Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- 4 (four)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- cc (cubic centimeter)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.U.</td>
<td>International unit</td>
<td>- IV (intravenous)</td>
<td>International unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- 10 (ten)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.D.</td>
<td>Once a day</td>
<td>- Q.O.D. (every other day)</td>
<td>Daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Q.I.D. (four times a day)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.O.D.</td>
<td>Every other day</td>
<td>- Q.D. (once a day)</td>
<td>Every other day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Q.I.D. (four times a day)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MgSO₄</td>
<td>Magnesium sulfate</td>
<td>MS or MSO₄ (morphine sulfate)</td>
<td>Magnesium sulfate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS or MSO₄</td>
<td>Morphine sulfate</td>
<td>MgSO₄ (morphine sulfate)</td>
<td>Morphine sulfate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using a trailing zero after a decimal point (e.g., “1.0”)</td>
<td>“1” (in the example given)</td>
<td>Ten-fold higher dosage (e.g., “1.0” could be mistaken for “10”)</td>
<td>Value without a trailing zero (e.g., “1”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaving out a leading zero before a decimal point (e.g., “.1”)</td>
<td>“.01” (in the example given)</td>
<td>Ten-fold higher dosage (e.g., “.1” could be mistaken for “1”)</td>
<td>Value with leading zero included (e.g., “.01”)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Facilities are only required to prohibit the terms on the minimum list.

However, many other terms can be risky, as well.

A table of other possible terms to avoid or prohibit appears on the following screen.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>This term...</th>
<th>Is used to mean...</th>
<th>But could be mistaken for...</th>
<th>Therefore, this term is suggested instead:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Ug          | Microgram          | mg (milligram), resulting in a 1000-fold overdose | - mcg  
- microgram |
| H.S.        | Half-strength      | H.S. (bedtime)              | Half-strength                                |
| H.S. or q.H.S. | Bedtime        | - H.S. (half-strength)  
- Q.H. (every hour) | At bedtime                                  |
| T.I.W.      | Three times a week | - T.I.D. (three times a day)  
- T.W. (twice weekly) | - 3 times weekly  
- Three times weekly |
| S.C. or S.Q.| Subcutaneous       | - S.L. (sublingual)  
- Five every | - Sub-Q  
- SubQ  
- Subcutaneously |
| D/C         | Discharge          | Discontinue                 | Discharge                                    |
| c.c.        | Cubic centimeter  | U (units)                   | ml (for "milliliters")                      |
| A.S.        | Left ear           | O.S. (left eye)             | Left ear                                     |
| A.D.        | Right ear          | - O.D. (right eye)  
- O.D. (once daily) | Right ear                                    |
<p>| A.U.        | Both ears          | - O.U. (both eyes)          | Both ears                                    |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risky Terms: Other Suggestions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other dangerous terms may be found at the Institute for Safe Medication Practices (ISMP) website.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Try not to use any of the terms on the ISMP list.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ISMP website:**

http://www.ismp.org
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risky Terms: Exceptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Remember: A trailing zero should not be used when writing out drug dosages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>However, the trailing zero is acceptable for:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lab values (i.e., test results)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Equipment sizes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FLASH INTERACTION: 2014.SWF

Drag and drop terms from the word bank to complete the following chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms that healthcare facilities must prohibit</th>
<th>Acceptable terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U</td>
<td>ml</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSO₄</td>
<td>mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.D.</td>
<td>dl</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
You have completed the lesson on recommendations.

Remember:
- On written documents, abbreviations, acronyms, and symbols can lead to drug errors.
- Drug terms prohibited by your facility should not be used.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>acronym</td>
<td>abbreviation formed from the initial letters of a series of words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>prohibit</td>
<td>forbid, veto, command against</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>risky</td>
<td>in the context of medication terminology: a medication term that could lead to a medication error</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pre-Assessment

1. With regard to the use of abbreviations in medical documentation, the Joint Commission recommends that each healthcare facility should:
   - a. Eliminate use of all abbreviations
   - b. Punish employees who use any abbreviations
   - c. Place confusing abbreviations on a "risky list"
   - d. Educate patients on the meaning of common abbreviations

Correct: Place confusing abbreviations on a risky list
Rationale: The Joint Commission recommends that healthcare facilities identify commonly used abbreviations. Confusing abbreviations should then be placed on a "risky list." Use of terms on the "risky list" should be prohibited.

2. The Joint Commission REQUIRES that healthcare facilities prohibit use of the term:
   - a. U (for units)
   - b. ug (for microgram)
   - c. D/C (for discharge)
   - d. T.I.W (for three times a week)

Correct: U (for units)
Rationale: Under Joint Commission guidelines, use of "U" (for units) MUST be prohibited. The Joint Commission recommends prohibiting use of the other terms listed here.

3. Instead of using the term "c.c." (for cubic centimeters), the Joint Commission recommends using the safer term:
   - a. ml
   - b. mcg
   - c. milligram
   - d. microgram

Correct: ml
Rationale: Instead of using the risky term "c.c.," use the safer term "ml" (for milliliters).

4. Under Joint Commission guidelines, which of the following is considered a safe term?
a. U
b. I.U.
c. Sub-Q
d. Q.O.D

Correct: Sub-Q
Rationale: Of the terms listed, "Sub-Q" is considered acceptable. The others terms are all risky. These words should be spelled out in full.

5. Under Joint Commission guidelines, which of the following is the safest way to document, "one microgram"?
   a. 1 ug
   b. 1 mcg
   c. 1.0 mcg
   d. 1.0 microgram

Correct: 1 mcg
Rationale: Trailing zeroes must not be used. The term "mcg" is safer than the risky "ug."

6. Under Joint Commission guidelines, which of the following is an acceptable way to document, "one unit, taken once a day"?
   a. 1 U q.d.
   b. 1.0 U Q.D.
   c. 1 unit daily
   d. 1.0 unit daily

Correct: 1 unit daily
Rationale: Trailing zeroes must not be used. "Unit" must be spelled out. "Daily" must be spelled out.

7. Under Joint Commission guidelines, which of the following is an acceptable way to document, "one international unit, taken at bedtime"?
   a. 1 IU qHS
   b. 1.0 I.U. H.S.
   c. 1 international unit at bedtime
d. 1.0 international unit at bedtime

Correct: 1 international unit at bedtime
Rationale: Trailing zeroes must not be used. "International unit" must be spelled out. It is safer to spell out "at bedtime."

8. Under Joint Commission guidelines, which of the following is an acceptable way to document, "one-tenth of a milligram, taken every other day"?
   a. 0.1 mg qod
   b. .1 mg Q.O.D.
   c. .1 mg every other day
   d. 0.1 mg every other day

Correct: 0.1 mg every other day
Rationale: Leading zeroes must be used. "Every other day" must be spelled out.
Final Exam

1. With regard to the use of abbreviations in medical documentation, the Joint Commission recommends that each healthcare facility should:
   a. Prohibit the use of all abbreviations
   b. Teach patients the meaning of common abbreviations
   c. Identify common abbreviations that might be confusing
   d. Place employees on probation if they use any abbreviations

Correct: Identify common abbreviations that might be confusing
Rationale: The Joint Commission recommends that healthcare facilities identify commonly used abbreviations. Confusing abbreviations should then be placed on a "risky list." Use of terms on the "risky list" should be prohibited.

2. The Joint Commission REQUIRES that healthcare facilities prohibit use of the abbreviation:
   a. Q.D. (for once a day)
   b. H.S. (for half-strength)
   c. S.C. (for subcutaneous)
   d. A.S. and A.D. (for left and right ear, respectively)

Correct:
Rationale: Under Joint Commission guidelines, use of "QD" (for once a day) must be prohibited. The Joint Commission recommends prohibiting use of the other terms listed here.

3. Under Joint Commission guidelines, which of the following is considered a safe term?
   a. ml
   b. 1.0
   c. MS
   d. Q.D

Correct: ml
Rationale: The term "ml" (for milliliter) is considered safe and should be used instead of the risky term "c.c."

4. Under Joint Commission guidelines, which of the following is considered a safe term?
   a. .1
b. qod

c. mcg
d. 1.00

Correct: mcg
Rationale: The term "mcg" (for microgram) is considered safe and should be used instead of the risky term "ug."

5. Under Joint Commission guidelines, which of the following is an acceptable way to document, "one-tenth of an international unit"?
   a. .1 IU
   b. 0.1 I.U.
   c. .1 international unit
   d. 0.1 international unit

Correct: 0.1 international unit
Rationale: Leading zeroes must be used. "International unit" must be spelled out.

6. Under Joint Commission guidelines, which of the following is an acceptable way to document, "1 unit, given subcutaneously"?
   a. 1 U S.Q.
   b. 1.0 U S.Q.
   c. 1 unit subQ
   d. 1.0 unit subQ

Correct: 1 unit subQ
Rationale: Trailing zeroes must not be used. "Unit" must be spelled out. The safer term "subQ" is preferable to the risky term "S.Q."

7. Under Joint Commission guidelines, which of the following is an acceptable way to document "ten milligrams morphine sulfate"?
   a. 10.0 mg MS
   b. 10 milligrams MSO4
   c. 10 mg morphine sulfate
   d. 10.0 milligrams morphine sulfate

Correct: 10 mg morphine sulfate
Rationale: Trailing zeroes must not be used. "Morphine sulfate" must be spelled out.
8. Under Joint Commission guidelines, which of the following is an acceptable way to document, "one gram magnesium sulfate daily"?
   a. 1 g MgSO4 qd
   b. 1.0 g MgSO4 Q.D.
   c. 1 g magnesium sulfate daily
   d. 1.0 gram magnesium sulfate daily

Correct: 1 g magnesium sulfate daily
Rationale: Trailing zeroes must not be used. "Magnesium sulfate" must be spelled out. "Daily" must be spelled out.