

## Important NEWS

To the Healthcare and Patient Communities at  
SUNY-Downstate Medical Center's University Hospital

SUBJECT : SENTINEL EVENT ALERT

### **MEDICATION ERROR PREVENTION: POTASSIUM CHLORIDE INJECTION**

Last week the news media reported an error concerning the use of potassium chloride injection that resulted in a tragic patient outcome. I am writing to inform all of you about the measures our Pharmacy Department has taken over a year ago to minimize the possibility of this same type of error from occurring at SUNY-Downstate Medical Center's University Hospital:

- Concentrated forms of potassium chloride injection are never dispensed directly to patient care areas and all forms of concentrated potassium chloride injection have been removed from patient care areas, including the crash cart, over a year ago
- Physicians are required to prescribe diluted infusions of potassium chloride injection
- The Pharmacy stocks pre-mixed large volume intravenous infusions of potassium chloride dilutions and diluted small volume infusions of potassium riders in standard concentrations
- The Pharmacy admixes all other prescribed doses of potassium chloride that are not commercially available in pre-mixed form. This type of compounding procedure is particularly important in the Pediatric and Neonate populations that we serve.
- Parenteral nutrition solutions for pediatric and neonate patients are not released from the Pharmacy until a quantitative analysis measuring potassium concentration is completed by the Chemistry Laboratory
- The Pharmacy admixes potassium chloride into peritoneal-dialysis solutions
- All potassium chloride solutions are dispensed with pre-printed labels indicating the presence of potassium chloride and the respective concentration
- All commercially available pre-mixed potassium chloride solutions are dispensed in infusion bags printed with the words "POTASSIUM CHLORIDE" in bright red
- Electrolyte infusions for neonate patients require the prescribing physician to complete the *24-Hour Potassium Chloride Infusion Order Form*
- All orders for pediatric and neonate patients must be written on a milligram/kilogram or milliequivalent/kilogram, etc. basis
- The planning stages have begun for the implementation of a full *IV Additive Laboratory* within the Pharmacy

**REMEMBER!! MEDICATION USE SAFETY IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY**

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