NORTHERN ROCKIES MEDICAL CENTER
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Department: All Departments	Policy #:
Policy: Error Prone Abbreviations, Symbols and Dose Designation	Administration:
	Medical Staff:
Effective Date:	Mid-level:
Approved Date:	CNO:
Revision Date:	Outside professional:

Policy: The abbreviations, symbols, and dose designations found in this table have been reported to ISMP through the USP-ISMP Medication Error Reporting Program as being frequently misinterpreted and involved in harmful medication errors. They should NEVER be used when communicating medical information. This includes internal communications, telephone/verbal prescriptions, computer-generated labels, labels for drug storage bins, medication administration records, as well as pharmacy and prescriber computer order entry screens. The Joint Commission of Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) has established a National Patient Safety Goal that specifies that certain abbreviations must appear on an accredited organization's do-not-use list; we have highlighted these items with a double asterisk (**). However, we hope that you will consider others beyond the minimum JCAHO requirements. By using and promoting safe practices and by educating on another about hazards, we can better protect our patients.

Procedure: NRMC, in an attempt to promote Patient Safety, will follow the guidelines listed below.

Symbols	Intended Meaning	Misinterpretation	Correction
3	Dram	Symbol for Dram mistaken as "3"	Use the Metric System
M	Minim	Symbol for minim mistaken as "mL"	Use the Metric System
x3d	for three days	Mistaken as "3 doses"	Use "for three days"
> and <	Greater than and Less than	Mistaken as opposite of intended; mistakenly use incorrect symbol; "<10" mistaken as "40"	Use "greater than" or "less than"
/ (slash mark)	Separates two doses or indicates "per"	Mistaken for the number 1 (e.g., "25 units/10 units" misread as "25 units and 110" units)	Use "per" rather than a slash mark to separate doses
@	At	Mistaken as "2"	Use "at"
&	And	Mistaken as "2"	Use "and"
+	Plus or and	Mistaken as "4"	Use "and"
°	Hour	Mistaken as a zero (e.g., q2° seen as q 20)	Use "hr", "h", or "hour"

Abbreviations	Intended Meaning	Misinterpretation	Correction
pg	Microgram	Mistaken as "mg"	Use "mcg"
AD, AS, AU	Right Ear, left Ear, Each ear	Mistaken as OD, OS, OU (right eye, left eye, each eye)	Use "right ear", "left ear", "each ear"
OD, OS, OU	Right eye, left eye, each eye	Mistaken as AD, AS, AU (right ear, left ear, each ear)	Use "right eye", "left eye", "each eye"
BT	Bedtime	Mistaken as "BID" (twice daily)	Use "bedtime"
cc	Cubic centimeters	Mistaken as "u" (units)	Use "mL"
D/C	Discharge or discontinue	premature discontinuation of medications if D/C (intended to mean "discharge") has been misinterpreted as "discontinued" when followed by a list of discharge medications.	Use "discharge" or "discontinue"
IJ	Injection	Mistaken as "IV" or "intrajugular"	Use "injection"
IN	Intranasal	Mistaken as "IM" or "IV"	Use "intranasal" or "NAS"
HS	Half-strength	Mistaken as "bedtime"	Use "half strength"
hs	At bedtime, hours of sleep	Mistaken as "half strength"	Use "bedtime"
IU**	International unit	Mistaken as IV (intravenous) or 10 (ten)	Use "units"
o.d. or OD	Once Daily	Mistaken as "right eye" (OD-oculus dexter), leading to oral liquid medications administered in the eye	Use "daily"
OJ	Orange Juice	Mistaken as OD or OS (right or left eye); drugs meant to be diluted in orange juice may be given in the eye	Use "orange juice"
Per os	By mouth, orally	The "os" can be mistaken as "left eye" (OS-oculus sinister)	Use "PO", "by mouth", or "orally"
q.d. or QD**	Every day	Mistaken as q.i.d. especially if the period after the "q" or the tail of the "q" is misunderstood as an "I"	Use "daily"
qhs	Nightly at bedtime	Mistaken as "qhr" or every hour	Use "nightly"
qn	Nightly or at bedtime	Mistaken as "qh" (every hour)	Use "nightly" or "at bedtime"
q.o.d. or QOD**	Every other day	Mistaken as "q.d." (daily) or "q.i.d. (four times daily) if the "o" is poorly written	Use "every other day"
q1d	Daily	Mistaken as q.i.d. (four times daily)	Use "daily"
q6PM, etc.	Every evening at 6pm	Mistaken as every 6 hours	Use "6 PM nightly" or "6PM daily"
SC, SQ, sub q	Subcutaneous	SC mistaken as SL (sublingual); SQ mistaken as "5 every"; the "q" in "sub q" has been mistaken as "every" (e.g., a heparin dose ordered "sub q 2 hours before surgery" misunderstood as every 2 hours before surgery)	Use "subcut" or "subcutaneously"
ss	Sliding Scale (insulin) or 1/2 (apothecary)	Mistaken as "55"	Spell out "sliding scale"; use "one-half" or "1/2"
SSRI	Sliding Scale Regular Insulin	Mistaken as selective-serotonin reuptake inhibitor	Spell out "Sliding Scale (insulin)"
SSI	Sliding Scale Insulin	Mistake as Strong Solution of Iodine (Lugol's)	Spell out "Sliding Scale (insulin)"
i/d	One Daily	Mistaken as "tid"	Use "1 daily"
TIW or tiw	3 times a week	Mistaken as "3 times a day" or "twice in a week"	Use "3 times weekly"
U or u**	Unit	Mistaken as the number 0 or 4, causing a 10 fold overdose or greater (e.g., 4U seen as "4O" or 4u seen as "44"); mistaken as "cc" so dose given in volume instead of units (e.g., 4u seen as 4cc)	Use "unit"

Dose Designations and Other Information	Intended Meaning	Misinterpretation	Correction
Training zero after decimal point (e.g., 1.0 mg) **	1 mg	Mistaken as 10 mg if the decimal point is not seen	Do not use trailing zeros for doses expressed in whole numbers
"Naked" decimal point (e.g., .5mg)**	0.5 mg	Mistaken as 5 mg if the decimal point is not seen	Use zero before a decimal point when the dose is less than a whole unit.
Drug name and dose run together (especially problematic for drug names that end in "l" such as Inderal40 mg; Tegretol300 mg)	Inderal 40 mg Tegretol 300 mg	Mistaken as Inderal 140 mg Mistaken as Tegretol 1300 mg	Place adequate space between the drug name, dose, and unit of measure
Numerical dose and unit of measure run together (e.g., 10mg, 100mL)	10 mg 100 mL	The "m" is sometime mistaken as a zero or two zeros, risking a 10-to-100 fold overdose	Place adequate space between the dose and unit of measure
Abbreviations such as mg. or mL. with a period following the abbreviation	mg mL	The period is unnecessary and could be mistaken as the number 1 if written poorly	Use mg, mL, etc. without a terminal period
Large doses without properly placed commas (e.g., 100000 units; 1000000 units)	100,000 units 1,000,000 units	100000 has been mistaken as 10,000 or 1,000,000; 1000000 has been mistaken as 100,000	Use commas for dosing units at or above 1,000, or use words such as 100 "thousand" or 1 "million" to improve readability

Drug Name Abbreviations	Intended Meaning	Misinterpretation	Correction
ARA A	vidarabine	Mistaken as cytarabine (ARA C)	Use Complete Drug Name
AZT	Zidovudine (Retrovir)	Mistaken as azathioprine or azteonam	Use Complete Drug Name
CPZ	Compazine (prochlorperazine)	Mistaken as chlorpromazine	Use Complete Drug Name
DPT	Demerol-Phenergan-Thorazine	Mistaken as Diptheria-pertussis-tetanus (vaccine)	Use Complete Drug Name
DTO	Diluted tincture of opium, or deodorized tincture of opium (Paregoric)	Mistaken as tincture of opium	Use Complete Drug Name
HCl	Hydrochloric acid or hydrochloride	Mistaken as potassium chloride (the "H" Is misinterpreted as "K")	Use Complete Drug Name unless expressed as a salt of a drug
HCT	hydrocortisone	Mistaken as hydrochlorothiazide	Use Complete Drug Name
HCTZ	hydrochlorothiazide	Mistaken as hydrocortisone (seen as HCT250 mg)	Use Complete Drug Name
MgSO4 **	Magnesium sulfate	Mistaken for Morphine sulfate	Use Complete Drug Name
MS, MSO4 **	Morphine Sulfate	Mistaken as Magnesium sulfate	Use Complete Drug Name
MTX	Methotrexate	Mistaken as mitoxantrone	Use Complete Drug Name
PCA	Procainamide	Mistaken as patient controlled analgesia	Use Complete Drug Name
PTU	Propylthiouracil	Mistaken as mercaptopurine	Use Complete Drug Name
T3	Tylenol with codeine No. 3	Mistaken as liothyronine	Use Complete Drug Name
TAC	triamcinolone	Mistaken as tetracaine, Adrenalin, Cocaine	Use Complete Drug Name
TNK	TNKase	Mistaken as "TPA"	Use Complete Drug Name
ZnSO4	zinc sulfate	Mistaken as morphine sulfate	Use Complete Drug Name

Stemmed Drug Names	Intended Meaning	Misinterpretation	Correction
"Nitro" drip	nitroglycerin infusion	Mistaken as sodium nitroprusside infusion	Use Complete Drug Name
"Norflox"	norfloxacin	Mistaken as Norflex	Use Complete Drug Name
"IV Vanc"	intravenous vancomycin	Mistaken as Invanz	Use Complete Drug Name