



TITLE

LABELLING MEDICATIONS

SCOPE

Provincial: Clinical Practice Settings

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Vice President, Collaborative Practice Nursing & Health Professions

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Not applicable

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NOTE: The first appearance of terms in bold in the body of this document (except titles) are defined terms – please refer to the Definitions section.

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OBJECTIVES

- To reduce medication errors related to the labelling of **medications** in Alberta Health Services **clinical practice settings**.
- To provide a recommended and consistent labelling process to guide **health care professionals** involved in medication preparation and administration.
- Clinical judgment may be exercised when a situation is determined to be outside the parameters provided in this guideline. If a deviation from this guideline is determined to be appropriate or necessary, documentation of the rationale shall be included on the patient's health record.

APPLICABILITY

Compliance with this document is required by all Alberta Health Services employees, members of the medical and midwifery staffs, Students, Volunteers, and other persons acting on behalf of Alberta Health Services (including contracted service providers as necessary) working in Clinical Practice Settings.

ELEMENTS

1. Points of Emphasis

- 1.1 This guideline applies to:
 - a) all medication prepared by a health care professional for administration (regardless of route) that involve mixing together two (2) or more ingredients or solutions, and at least one (1) is a medication,

- b) all medications or IV solutions for administration, premixed by a drug manufacturer that does not have a patient specific label.
- 1.2 During **emergency situations**, it is understood that a health care professional may not always be able to label medications prior to medication administration. Apply a label as soon as possible following the emergency situation.
- 1.3 During inter-facility transfers, where a medication infusion is initiated by the sending facility using this Guideline, Emergency Medical Services health care professionals shall continue to meet the labelling requirements as presented in this Guideline.

2. Practices for Labelling Medications

- 2.1 A medication label, hand-written, computer-generated or otherwise, shall be applied:
- a) at time of preparation (when mixed by health care professionals),
 - b) at time of administration of medications or IV solutions premixed by drug manufacturers.
- 2.2 Recommended labelling elements include:
- a) patient's first and last names;
 - b) second patient identifier (include one [1] of the following):
 - (i) date of birth (DOB),
 - (ii) unique lifetime identifier (ULI),
 - (iii) personal health number (PHN),
 - (iv) medical record number (MRN),
 - (v) patient identification barcode, or
 - (vi) government-issued identification number (see also Alberta Health Services *Patient Identification Policy*);
 - c) medication name;
 - d) strength/concentration (where applicable; i.e., strength for solid dosage forms and concentration for liquid dosage forms);
 - e) dose;
 - f) route of administration;
 - g) total approximate volume in the preparation (where applicable);

- h) preparation time and date (where applicable; i.e., parenteral medication);
and
- i) the preparer's initials or signature.

3. Label Placement

- 3.1 Labels shall not be applied in a manner which would obscure or conceal any critical, pre-existing information from the manufacturer or pharmacy.

DEFINITIONS

Clinical practice setting means, for the purposes of this guideline, any setting where medications are administered to patients.

Emergency situation means a circumstance which requires health care that is necessary to preserve life, prevent serious physical or mental harm, or to alleviate severe pain.

Health care professional means an individual who is a member of a regulated health discipline, as defined by the *Health Disciplines Act* (Alberta) or the *Health Professions Act* (Alberta), and who practises within scope and role.

Medication means any substance or mixture of substances manufactured, sold or represented for use in the diagnosis, treatment, mitigation or prevention of a disease, disorder or abnormal physical state, or its symptoms, in human beings, and restoring, correcting or modifying organic functions in human beings.

REFERENCES

- Alberta Health Services Governance Documents:
 - *Do Not Use List of Abbreviations, Symbols and Dose Designations for Medication-Related Documentation* Policy (#PS-08)
 - *Patient Identification* Policy (#PS-06)

VERSION HISTORY

Date	Action Taken