

Med Safety Signal

Risks in medication safety reported by LTC Homes in Ontario

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Vulnerabilities in Quarterly Medication Review Process

Reported Incident (details are modified to ensure confidentiality of the home and reporter)

In Ontario long-term care homes, prescribers perform quarterly medication reviews during which they authorize needed prescriptions and ensure the appropriateness of each resident's medication regimen. As part of this review, a list of each resident's current medications is typically printed on a quarterly medication review form, where the prescriber can indicate whether each medication is to be continued, discontinued, modified, or held.

In a recently reported incident, a pharmacy printed the resident's quarterly medication review form ahead of time. Between the time the form was printed and the time of the review, numerous medication changes were made for this resident, but the new medication orders were not transferred to the preprinted quarterly medication review form. A "good catch" occurred when the prescriber noticed discrepancies between the recent changes and the preprinted form.

ISMP Canada staff determined the following key contributing factors and considerations for improvement. It is the responsibility of medication safety leaders in long-term care to determine what, if any, actions for improvement are needed in their medication management processes.

Key Contributing Factors:

- The forms used for quarterly medication reviews are separate, stand-alone documents that are not linked to residents' charts and the usual prescribing process.
- Printing of the quarterly medication review form ahead of time allowed the form to become outdated when medication changes were made before the quarterly review took place.
- There was no systematic way to ensure that any recent new orders or order changes were reflected on the quarterly medication review form.

Considerations for Improvement:

- Institute computerized prescriber order entry with built-in, real-time medication review capability to eliminate the need to print quarterly medication review forms ahead of time.
- Coordinate timing for quarterly medication reviews with the pharmacy (through just-in-time printing of quarterly medication review forms), nursing (through double-check and manual update processes), and the prescriber (through timely completion of the review form after printing) to minimize the risk of missing intervening orders.
- Formalize updating and checking procedures for new orders received between printing of the quarterly medication review form and completion of the form by the prescriber.
- Develop a process to enable communication and collaboration between prescribers, nursing and pharmacy to inform quarterly medication reviews.

Model policy for quarterly medication reviews: <https://ismpcanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/LTC-Model-Policy-4-Quarterly-Med-Assessments.pdf>

Report an incident to ISMP Canada

<https://ismpcanada.ca/report/>