

Identifying and Prioritising Risks with Medication Preparation and Storage



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Background

Identification of risks associated with medication preparation and storage is a challenge within our large and complex healthcare organisation. Melbourne Health sites include acute, subacute, mental health, community care and residential care facilities, with wide variation in their requirements to ensure safe medication management.

Description

We sought to identify risks with medication preparation and storage in each area, to guide and prioritise implementation of strategies to ensure we met best practice standards.

Action

We developed a Medication Preparation and Storage Self-Assessment specific to our organisation, based on literature¹⁻⁴, benchmarking, available standards of practice⁵⁻⁷ and local procedures, in collaboration with members of our multidisciplinary Medication Safety Committee.

The self-assessment included best practice statements with reflective questions relating to medication preparation and storage (see below).

Part 1: Medication Preparation

- Behaviours e.g. independent double checks, hand hygiene
- Environment e.g. dedicated workspace to prepare medicines

Part 2: Medication Storage

- Security, shelves, signs, imprest list maintenance, cleaning, fluids, controlled drugs and fridges

The self-assessment was distributed to each area that prepares and/or stores medicines within our organisation, for completion by the nurse unit manager together with the area pharmacist.

Responses were obtained using REDCap, a secure web application for online surveys and databases, then analysed using Excel®.

Evaluation

A total of 68 responses were received, with a 100% response rate from areas with a Pharmacy imprest service.

Aspects of medication preparation and storage identified for improvement included (see Figure 1):

- Having a dedicated workspace for medication preparation both inside and outside the medication room
- Ensuring medications stored on imprest shelves are separated by dividers
- Avoiding medications left unattended outside the medication room
- Ensuring medication rooms are cleaned on a regular basis, tidy and free of dust
- Maintaining current and appropriate signs, 'shelf-talkers' and posters for the area
- Having a copy of the current imprest list available
- Ensuring stock is correctly rotated and there is no expired stock
- Managing medicines for return to Pharmacy

Many areas took immediate local action following completion of the self-assessment. Areas that identified significant risks were contacted individually to provide guidance.

Results were shared with area managers and their feedback was incorporated into an action plan for the key areas for improvement. Other departments were consulted as applicable such as Environmental Services regarding supervised cleaner access to medication rooms and Facilities Management regarding medication room design.

Implications

The aspects identified for improvement have been prioritised for organisation-wide action. A six month follow up is planned.

The responses have provided reassurance that we are working towards best practice for medication preparation and storage across our organisation.

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Figure 1: Medication preparation and storage self-assessment areas for improvement ('not applicable' responses excluded)

