

Policy: Abbreviations, Acronyms, Symbols and Dose Designations

Manual: Organizational Chapter: Medication Management (MM)
Leadership (LD)

Review responsibility:

Formulated: 12/03 Reviewed: 11/06 Revised: 6/2011

Policy applies to: All clinical staff (X)

Committee Endorsement: Medication Management

Approval:

President & CEO

POLICY:

Abbreviations, acronyms, symbols and dose designations are acceptable if they:

- 1. Are not included on the "Do Not Use List"
- 2. Are context-specific, and are easily decipherable
- 3. Contained in the Medical Abbreviations Book available on the Trinitas Intranet Site and do NOT appear on our "Do Not Use List" which is posted on this Intranet Site.

PURPOSE

To provide standardization for the use of acceptable and unacceptable abbreviations, acronyms, symbols and dose designations for medication ordering. To reduce the potential for error or misinterpretation when abbreviation, acronyms, symbols and dose designations are used in the medical record for medication orders. All practitioners must avoid dangerous abbreviations (see attached list), symbols, acronyms, and dose designations that are unacceptable because of their propensity for misinterpretation and error.

PROCEDURE

- 1. Abbreviations, acronyms, symbols and dose designations with multiple definitions may be used if the intended definition is context specific.
- 2. All healthcare professionals shall ensure that all entries in the medical record (including medication orders) do not contain unapproved abbreviations.
- 3. The use of an unapproved abbreviation, acronym, symbol or dose designation will be clarified with the health care professional making the entry. The same will apply to an abbreviation, acronym, symbol or dose designation that is not on the unapproved list, but is still unclear in general and/or unclear in the context that it is used.
- 4. Based on the current list of unapproved abbreviations, the following rules will apply:
- Orders for "Units" will be written out.
- Orders for "International Units" will be written out.
- Orders will be written out for microgram; "ug" or "µg" will not be used.



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- "QD" and "OD" orders will be written out as "daily", "once a day" or to be given at a specific time.
- "QID" orders will be written out for "four times daily" or "4 x daily".
- "QOD" orders will be written out for "every other day".
- Orders for "S.C." or "S.Q." will be written out as "Sub-Q" or "subcutaneously".
- Orders for "MS" or "MSO4" will be written as "morphine " or "morphine sulfate".
- Orders for "MgSO4" will be written as "magnesium sulfate".
- Trailing zeros will not be used after a decimal point (e.g. warfarin 2 mg, NOT warfarin 2.0 mg).
- A zero will always be used before a decimal point (e.g. morphine 0.5mg NOT morphine .5mg).
- Orders for medications to be administered via otic or ophthalmologic routes of administration shall be written out as "right eye" (not OD), "left eye" (not OS), "both eyes" (not OU), "right ear" (not AD), "left ear" (not AS) or "both ears" (not AU).
- The following abbreviations, acronyms and symbols may not be used in the medical record, medication orders/prescriptions, or other clinical documentation for the intended meanings listed below:

Unapproved Abbreviations

Unapproved Abbreviations	Intended Meaning	Potential Problem	Preferred Term
U	Units International Units	"U" Misread as 0,4, or cc (e.g., an order for 10 U of insulin can be misread as 100) "IU" mistaken as IV or 10	Write out "units" or "International Units"
AD, AS, AU OD, OS, OU	Right, left, both ear(s) & eye(s)	Mistaken for each other, "daily", "by mouth" and zeros.	Write out "right ear", "left ear", "both ears", "right eye", "left eye" or "both eyes"
ug, µg	Microgram	µg misread as mg or grams	Write out "microgram"
QD, OD QID QOD	Every day Four times daily Every other day	Each can be mistaken for each other	Write "daily", q am or q pm Write four times daily or 4x daily Write every other day
S.C. or S.Q.	Subcutaneous	Mistaken for SL (sublingual or "5 every"	Write "Sub-Q", or "subcutaneously"
Trailing zero (e.g., 1.0 mg)	1 mg	Misread as 10mg	DO NOT USE trailing zeros after a decimal point.
No leading zero (e.g., 1 mg)	0.1 mg	Misread as 1 mg or 11 mg	Always use a zero before a decimal point.
MSO ₄ MS	Morphine sulfate	Mistaken for magnesium sulfate	Write out "morphine" or "morphine sulfate"
MgSO ₄	Magnesium sulfate	Mistaken for morphine sulfate	Write out "magnesium sulfate"

^{*}These are just a few of the many medication abbreviations that exist. Due to the error potential of abbreviation usage, they should all be avoided.