

### Let People Know Who You Are – Patient Identification

Consumers are already submitting useful reports to SafeMedicationUse.ca! One of the first reports described a patient being given another patient's medication while in hospital. The medication involved was oxycodone, a narcotic pain killer. Even though the patient did not suffer any serious harm as a result of the error, mistakes like this one can cause harm.

When a patient receives a medication intended for another patient, it is often because the patient was not properly identified before the medication was given. For example, identifying a patient only by name can cause a mistake if there is another patient with the same name or a similar name. Also, patients who are confused or hard of hearing might answer "yes" even if they are called by the wrong name.

Mistaken identity can also cause other types of error in healthcare. In fact, this problem is so well-known that the World Health Organization has taken steps to correct it. Patient Identification is one of "Nine Patient Safety Solutions" developed to prevent harm to patients during care.

Before giving any medication, a caregiver must be certain that the medication is being given to the right patient. Relying on only the patient's name is not enough—at least two identifiers should be used. For example, in hospital, a nurse or doctor could check the patient's full name and date of birth, or the patient's full name and health record number. Often this information is printed on a wristband, which should be checked before a medication is given. This should be done even if the nurse or doctor knows the patient.

Here are some ways that patients and their families can help prevent "wrong person" mistakes:

- When you register to receive healthcare, be sure that all your identifying information is recorded correctly. Check that all your names are spelled correctly, and that your date of birth is accurate.
- Always identify yourself, using your full name, before you accept any medication or before any health-related procedure. Your family members can help with this if for any reason you can't do it yourself.
- If you are asked to wear a wristband, check it to make sure that all the information on it is correct. Expect healthcare providers to check the wristband before you receive a medication or undergo a procedure
- Be familiar with the names of your medications, how you take them and why you take them. Confirm that the medication you are receiving is meant for you. If the medication you are being given does not seem to be correct, ask questions or raise your concerns. You should expect to have your questions answered and your concerns addressed.

Patient identification is a key factor in the safe delivery of healthcare, including the administration of medications to patients. Letting people know who you are is one way you can help to make your healthcare safer!