

	POLICY Number: 7311-75-006 Title: Abbreviations
Authorization [] President and CEO [X] Vice President, Finance and Administration	Source: Chair(s), Interprofessional Practice Advisory Council Index: Date Approved: July 14, 2006 Date Revised: February 14, 2012 Date Effective: February 21, 2012 Date Reaffirmed: Scope: SHR & Affiliates

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1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish Saskatoon Health Region's (SHR's) requirements regarding the use of Abbreviations in clinical documentation.

2. PRINCIPLES

- 2.1 Abbreviations cause a significant risk of misinterpretation by other healthcare providers.
- 2.2 If there is any question of correct interpretation of an abbreviation or symbol, the word(s) must be written or displayed in full text.
- 2.3 The Institute of Safe Medication Practices Canada (ISMP Canada) has established abbreviations that shall never be used in medication documentation (see Appendix A).
- 2.4 Do Not Use abbreviations (Appendix A) shall not be used in handwritten clinical documentation, SHR approved clinical forms, or any medication documentation.

3. POLICY

Acceptable Use of Abbreviations

- 3.1 Abbreviations and Symbols used within SHR shall be used and accepted as referenced in *Jablonski's Dictionary of Medical Acronyms & Abbreviations – 6th Ed. (2009)* or in *Dental Abbreviations, Symbols and Acronyms – 2nd Ed. (2008)*, **except as noted in the Do Not Use List (Appendix A)**. Jablonski's Dictionary is available through the Medical Library on the SHR Infonet. Dental Abbreviations is available on the American Dental Association website www/ada/org.

- 3.2 Professional status abbreviations will be accepted as recognized by the professional associations.

Prohibited Abbreviations

- 3.3 The ISMP Canada list of *Do Not Use Dangerous Abbreviations, Symbols and Dose Designations* is to be strictly adhered to in all handwritten clinical documentation, all medication documentation and all SHR approved clinical forms. Abbreviations on the attached *Do Not Use* list are never to be used, as they are frequently misinterpreted and have resulted in harmful medication errors (See Appendix A).
- 3.4 Preprinted physician orders, order sets, medical directives or other paper or electronic forms related to medication use shall not include any abbreviations, symbols, and/or dose designations identified on the *Do Not Use List*.
- 3.5 The dangerous abbreviations, symbols and dose designations as listed in the *Do Not Use List* will not be used on any pharmacy-generated labels and forms.
- 3.6 Abbreviations shall not be used on consent forms, for medication names, to describe procedures or as a final diagnosis.
- 3.7 Auditing of continued usage of prohibited abbreviations in medication related documentation will be undertaken by the Medication Use Quality (MUQ) Committee on a regular basis and will be reported to the MUQ Committee and Regional Quality and Safety Committee.

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

All Staff and Physicians

The author of the document containing an abbreviation, symbol and/or acronym assumes responsibility for usage. The onus is on the author to ensure the meaning is clear and understandable to the health care provider who must take action or use the information to provide care. A reader who is unsure of the meaning must clarify it with the writer.

5. POLICY MANAGEMENT

The management of this policy including policy education, monitoring, implementation and amendment is the responsibility of Chair, Interprofessional Practice Council.

6. NON-COMPLIANCE/BREACH

Non-compliance with this policy will result in a review of the incident. Repeated non-compliance may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment and/or privileges with SHR.

7. REFERENCES

American Dental Association (2008). Dental Abbreviations, Symbols and Acronyms (2nd Ed.). Chicago: Author.
www.ada.org/sections/professionalResources/pdfs/dentalpractice_abbreviations.pdf

Institute for Safe Medication Practices (ISMP) Canada Safety Bulletin: Volume 6, Issue 4.
Do Not Use - Dangerous Abbreviations, Symbols and Dose Designations. (2006)
Download from: www.ismp-canada.org/dangerousabbreviations.htm

Jablonski, S. (2009). Jablonski's Dictionary of Medical Acronyms & Abbreviations (6th Ed.).
Philadelphia, PA: Saunders.

Northern Lights Health Region. (2007, December) Abbreviations Policy CP-b-39 (Clinical
Practice Manual). Fort McMurray, Alberta: Author.

Do Not Use

Dangerous Abbreviations, Symbols and Dose Designations

The abbreviations, symbols, and dose designations found in this table have been reported as being frequently misinterpreted and involved in harmful medication errors. They should NEVER be used when communicating medication information.

Abbreviation	Intended Meaning	Problem	Correction
U	unit	Mistaken for "0" (zero), "4" (four), or cc.	Use "unit".
IU	international unit	Mistaken for "IV" (intravenous) or "10" (ten).	Use "unit".
Abbreviations for drug names		Misinterpreted because of similar abbreviations for multiple drugs; e.g., MS, MSO ₄ (morphine sulphate), MgSO ₄ (magnesium sulphate) may be confused for one another.	Do not abbreviate drug names.
QD QOD	Every day Every other day	QD and QOD have been mistaken for each other, or as 'qid'. The Q has also been misinterpreted as "2" (two).	Use "daily" and "every other day".
OD	Every day	Mistaken for "right eye" (OD = oculus dexter).	Use "daily".
OS, OD, OU	Left eye, right eye, both eyes	May be confused with one another.	Use "left eye", "right eye" or "both eyes".
D/C	Discharge	Interpreted as "discontinue whatever medications follow" (typically discharge medications).	Use "discharge".
cc	cubic centimetre	Mistaken for "u" (units).	Use "mL" or "millilitre".
µg	microgram	Mistaken for "mg" (milligram) resulting in one thousand-fold overdose.	Use "mcg".
Symbol	Intended Meaning	Potential Problem	Correction
@	at	Mistaken for "2" (two) or "5" (five).	Use "at".
> <	Greater than Less than	Mistaken for "7" (seven) or the letter "L". Confused with each other.	Use "greater than"/"more than" or "less than"/"lower than".
Dose Designation	Intended Meaning	Potential Problem	Correction
Trailing zero	ℵ.0 mg	Decimal point is overlooked resulting in 10-fold dose error.	Never use a zero by itself after a decimal point. Use "ℵ mg".
Lack of leading zero	.ℵ mg	Decimal point is overlooked resulting in 10-fold dose error.	Always use a zero before a decimal point. Use "0.ℵ mg".

ISMP Canada July 2006

Adapted from ISMP's List of *Error-Prone Abbreviations, Symbols, and Dose Designations 2006*

Report actual and potential medication errors to ISMP Canada via the web at https://www.ismp-canada.org/err_report.htm or by calling 1-866-54-ISMP. ISMP Canada guarantees confidentiality of information received and respects the reporter's wishes as to the level of detail included in publications.



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