

RGH Pharmacy E-Bulletin

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A joint initiative of the Patient Services Section and the Drug and Therapeutics Information Service of the Pharmacy Department, Repatriation General Hospital, Daw Park, South Australia. The RGH Pharmacy E-Bulletin is distributed in electronic format on a weekly basis, and aims to present concise, factual information on issues of current interest in therapeutics, drug safety and cost-effective use of medications.

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Recommendations for prescribing terminology (Part 1)

A common cause of medication errors is the use of potentially ambiguous abbreviations and dose expressions. In order to circumvent the misinterpretation of medication prescriptions, the RGH Drug and Therapeutics Advisory Committee have recently approved a schedule of commonly used and acceptable abbreviations, as well as compiling a list of abbreviations which, in the interest of patient safety, should be avoided. This two-part series of the RGH e-bulletin presents a summary of these recommendations.

In addition to concordance with the recommended terminology, general principles for appropriate prescribing include:

- Use of generic drug names in most cases (exceptions include prescription of combination products where the trade name adequately identifies the medication being prescribed);
- Write medicine names in full;
- Avoid use of Roman numerals; and
- Use metric units.

Prescribing terms fall broadly three categories: terminology for route of administration, unit of measure and dose frequency or timing. Route of administration terminology will be covered in this issue of the RGH e-bulletin; the latter two categories will appear in next week's issue.

Commonly used AND acceptable abbreviations for Route of Administration

Abbreviation	Meaning
PO	Per oral / by mouth
NG	Nasogastric
SUBLINGUAL	Sublingual
IV	Intravenous
IM	Intramuscular
SUBCUT	Subcutaneous
IT	Intrathecal
PICC	Peripherally inserted central catheter
PR	Per rectum
PV	Per vagina
Gutte	Eye drop
Occ	Eye ointment
Top	Topical
MDA	Metered dose aerosol
Neb	Nebulised / nebuliser
PEG	Percutaneous enteral gastrostomy

Abbreviations to be AVOIDED

Abbreviation to avoid	Intended meaning	Reason for avoiding	Acceptable alternative
S/C	Subcutaneous	Mistaken for (sublingual)	S/L Subcut or subcutaneous
S/L	Sublingual	Mistaken for (subcutaneous)	S/C Sublingual or "under tongue"
E	Eye or ear	Misinterpreted as the alternate organ	Write ear or eye in full

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION – CONTACT THE PHARMACY DEPARTMENT ON 82751763 or email: chris.alderman@rgh.sa.gov.au
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