



DHBNZ Safe and Quality Use of
Medicines Group (SQM group)
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To whom it may concern

An increased range of potassium chloride pre-mixed intravenous solutions are now available in New Zealand. This follows a lengthy registration process. While the range available does not cover all the concentrations/fluids that SQM group would consider ideal, the range has been extended and the group is grateful to Baxters for their efforts in bringing these solutions to the New Zealand market.

SQM group would ask all DHBs to take this opportunity to review their processes, policies and procedures surrounding the use, storage, prescribing and administration of potassium chloride intravenously. The risk of inadvertent administration of undiluted potassium chloride concentrate injection is high. While there are no incident reports of this occurring in New Zealand there are likely to be individuals within each DHB who have either seen this occur, or who have intervened to prevent it occurring, at some stage of their career. There is a simple forcing function available to prevent this incident and that is the removal of the concentrate injection from patient areas.

Examples of policies, guidelines and change management case studies used at Australian hospitals implemented following publication of a high risk medication alert on potassium chloride are available on the Australian Commission on Quality and Safety in Healthcare website.^{1,2,3,4} While some DHBs will have no standard potassium supplementation protocol and each prescriber will have their own personal preferred protocol, these examples show that it is possible for hospitals to implement a standard supplementation protocol.

Evaluation of compliance with the recommendations in the alert will be carried out six months following publication. This evaluation will allow individual DHBs to audit their own practice with respect to potassium chloride concentrate injection and potassium infusions and the risk to patient safety.

Regards

Beth Loe
National Co-ordinator
On behalf of DHBNZ Safe and Quality Use of Medicines Group

References

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2. High Risk Medication Alert project – Change Management Case Study, August 2003, Royal Adelaide Hospital, South Australia available from URL: [http://www.health.gov.au/internet/safety/publishing.nsf/Content/E10A5557BF8C10B2CA2571D80004316A/\\$File/casestudy_rah.pdf](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/safety/publishing.nsf/Content/E10A5557BF8C10B2CA2571D80004316A/$File/casestudy_rah.pdf)
3. Western Australian Policy for Use of Intravenous Potassium Chloride available from URL: <http://www.health.wa.gov.au/circulars/attachments/235.pdf>
4. Policy for administration of intravenous potassium chloride, Alfred Hospital, Melbourne, Australia available from URL: [http://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/internet/safety/publishing.nsf/Content/E10A5557BF8C10B2CA2571D80004316A/\\$File/tools_alfred.pdf](http://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/internet/safety/publishing.nsf/Content/E10A5557BF8C10B2CA2571D80004316A/$File/tools_alfred.pdf)