

*The Administration, Safe Handling,
and Disposal of
Chemotherapy Medications*

Goal

- To provide the registered nurse with an understanding of the administration and safe handling of chemotherapy and other hazardous drugs.
- Instruct the registered nurse how to use the proper precautions to avoid exposure and the disposal of hazardous agents.



What is Chemotherapy?

- A systematic approach to treating cancer by using cytotoxic (cell kill), hormonal and immunologic agents.
- May be used as single agents or in combination with other drugs.
- Routes: oral, IV, intrathecal (less common are intravesical, SQ or IM).
- Can be used for.
 - Cancer
 - Lupus (non-oncological use)
 - Multiple sclerosis (non-oncological use)

What is a “Hazardous” Drug?

- The term hazardous describes drugs that require special handling because of the health risks that may result from exposure.
- All chemotherapy is considered hazardous.
- According to OSHA, safe levels of occupational exposure cannot be determined therefore it is imperative that those who work adhere to practices designed to minimize exposure.



Why Give Chemotherapy?

- **Cure:** Complete eradication of cancer.
- **Control:** Live with cancer, extension of life, cure not realistic.
- **Palliative:** Comfort, relieve pressure or reduction of organ obstruction.



Chemotherapy “MUSTS”

- Must verify correct physician order.
- Must obtain consent for administration of chemotherapy DH 139, ***only one consent per hospitalization required.***
- Must verify medication with second RN .
- No verbal or telephone orders for chemo.
- No chemo (oral or IV) can be altered, the Pharmacy Department will provide the medication as ordered by a physician following accepted guidelines to prepare chemotherapy medications.
- IV chemo orders must be written on a Doctors Hospital chemotherapy order form DH 107.




Safe Handling Oral Chemotherapy in the Hospital

- Never handle medication with bare fingers- always use chemotherapy gloves.
- Wear appropriate PPE; i.e. powder- free chemotherapy gloves, gowns, mask or NIOSH-approved respirator when there is risk of aerosol exposure.
- Dispose of chemotherapy waste including medication cup, gloves, biohazard bag sent from pharmacy in proper yellow waste bin in soiled utility room.



Chemotherapy Precautions

- While the patient is taking any form of chemotherapy he/she must be on the proper precautions.
 - Double flush toilet. 
 - Wear appropriate PPE when handling body fluids of patients that are currently receiving and 48 hours* post chemotherapy administration.
 - Linen contaminated with any body fluids must be contained in a leak-proof bag and placed with all other linen.
- *Please note - Some chemos may remain much longer than 48 hours in the system.**

Patient Education

- Inform patient he/she must immediately report:
 - ❖ Fever
 - ❖ Severe shaking chills
 - ❖ Any bleeding that does not stop
 - ❖ Difficulty breathing
 - ❖ Sudden change in ability to think or speak clearly
 - ❖ Soreness in his/her mouth
 - ❖ Severe nausea or vomiting lasting more than 24 hours
 - ❖ Unusual bruising
 - ❖ New skin rash
 - ❖ Severe diarrhea



Documentation

- Document administration of chemotherapy and patient's response.
- Document the education provided to the patient and/or family.



Reference

- *Chemotherapy and Biotherapy Guidelines and Recommendations for Practice, 3rd edition. Martha Polovich, Julie Whitford, Mikaela Olsen. 2009*