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

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