

Institute for Safe Medication Practices

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ISMP Medication Safety Alert!® Acute Care
Newsletter Celebrates Ten Year Anniversary

HUNTINGDON VALLEY, Pa.— This month marks the completion of ten years of publication of the *ISMP Medication Safety Alert! Acute Care edition*, which has grown to become one of the most timely and comprehensive medication alert systems in the world. It is now the only publication reaching nearly every U.S. hospital with vital and potentially life-saving information on medication and device errors and adverse drug reactions as well as practical prevention strategies.

The first issue of the newsletter was sent out on January 15, 1996. It was produced by two staff members and sent by fax to about 30 hospitals. The biweekly newsletter now has a readership of more than 650,000, a dedicated editorial staff of five and dedicated advisory and review committees.

In the first issue, the Institute described its plans for capturing important information communicated to the United States Pharmacopeia (USP)-ISMP Medication Error Reporting Program voluntarily by health care providers and patients, and suggested that subscribers use the information by placing recommendations on an appropriate committee agenda each month and brainstorming prevention measures with department staff.

Over the years, those suggestions have obviously been taken to heart. Many of the nation's hospitals continue to track this information on an ongoing basis, assigning tasks and completion dates to assure problems identified through the USP-ISMP MERP and featured in the newsletter are appropriately addressed.

A 2004 readership survey completed by 748 subscribers provided evidence that the newsletter has spurred numerous changes to reduce the risk of medication errors. Most pharmacy directors (95%), quality/risk management staff (90%), and nurse executives (87%) who responded reported that the newsletter had prompted organization-wide changes. More than 70% of frontline practitioners, such as staff nurses and pharmacists, reported frequent changes in their individual practices in response to newsletter coverage. Many readers reported increased patient and staff education using the newsletter as a learning aid.

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Page 2

The success of the *ISMP Medication Safety Alert!* would not have been possible without the input, loyalty, and responsiveness of subscribers and those who report errors, near misses and hazardous conditions to USP, ISMP and FDA through the MERP. On the occasion of the newsletter's 10th anniversary, the editorial staff would like to thank medical professionals for their commitment to medication safety and putting published error-prevention strategies to good use.

The *ISMP Medication Safety Alert! Acute Care edition* is aimed at directors of pharmacy, risk managers, nurses, physicians, product managers, and frontline practitioners. The newsletter provides hospitals with a way to review potential errors *before* they occur as well as review errors that have actually occurred at other sites. It is sent biweekly via e-mail and subscribers also receive urgent advisories about serious errors or information that requires immediate attention. Information can be reproduced and circulated in whole or in part within the subscribing organization.

An anniversary archive CD ROM containing ten years of *ISMP Medication Safety Alert!* is now available. The CD contains all back issues through the end of 2005, including all original text, images, and pertinent links to additional material on ISMP's website. It is searchable by keyword and text can be bookmarked, highlighted, and annotated for future reference. To order the CD, visit ISMP's website at <http://www.ismp.org/featuredproduct.asp>

For more information on the *ISMP Medication Safety Alert! Acute Care edition* or the Institute's other newsletters for nurses, community/ambulatory care practitioners, and consumers, go to <http://www.ismp.org/Newsletters/default.asp>.

About ISMP: The Institute for Safe Medication Practices (ISMP) is a 501c(3) nonprofit organization that works closely with healthcare practitioners and institutions, regulatory agencies, consumers, and professional organizations to provide education about medication errors and their prevention. ISMP represents more than 30 years of experience in helping healthcare practitioners keep patients safe, and continues to lead efforts to improve the medication use process.

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