

[IMAGE]

One in Five Medication Doses in Error

Answering 20% of the questions wrong on tests taken in school is generally considered better than average, earning a student a B or C letter grade. But when it comes to hospitals providing medication to patients, would you consider dosage mistakes made 20% of the time acceptable?

Thirty-six hospitals accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations, nonaccredited hospitals, and "skilled nursing facilities" in Georgia and Colorado were observed for medication errors in a study published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine*. Fifty day-shift doses per hospital unit, or all doses for a single medication pass, were examined by a research pharmacist, with any medication errors reaching patients recorded.

One in five doses were incorrect; 7% of all dosages (or nearly 40% of errors) were deemed potentially harmful to the patient. In order of likelihood, the most frequent errors were: drugs given at the wrong time; omission of the correct medication; incorrect dosages; or unauthorized drugs given.

Nobody's perfect, but is this rate of drug errors acceptable? The authors of this study estimate that at an average of 10 doses per patient per day, each patient would be administered approximately two incorrect medication errors each day.

Reference:

Barker KN, Flynn EA, et al. Medication errors observed in 36 health care facilities. *Archives of Internal Medicine* 2002;162(16), pp. 1897-1903.

For more information on general health, go to <http://www.chiroweb.com/find/archives/general>.

Page printed from:

http://www.toyourhealth.com/mpacms/tyh/article.php?id=768&no_paginate=true&no_b=true