Department of Pharmacy

Drug Product Selection – Formulary: Therapeutic Interchanges (N 11-27)

Intent:

The pharmacy may dispense a Therapeutic Interchange medication as approved by the Medical Staff, unless Dispense as Written (D.A.W.) is indicated or the patient has an allergy to the noted product.

Definition:

Two or more medications are considered therapeutically equivalent if they can be expected to produce similar levels of clinical effectiveness and sound medical outcomes in patients. Therapeutic Interchanges are guided by evidence-based prescribing guidelines.

A Therapeutic Interchange (also referred to as Therapeutic Alternative, Formulary Equivalent, or Therapeutic Substitution) may include the following:

a. One medication in a therapeutic class is dispensed for a different medication in the same therapeutic class, e.g., pantoprazole (Protonix®) is dispensed for lansoprazole (Prevacid®), diltiazem (Tiazac®) is dispensed for diltiazem (Dilacor® XR).

b. A combination of medications are dispensed to “make up” another chemical entity, e.g., pseudoephedrine and fexofenadine = Allegra® D.

Policy:

1. Medications considered Therapeutic Interchanges must be approved annually by the Medical Staff (see Pharmacy Policy II – Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee). In addition, to help optimize patient therapy and decrease costs, a well structured Therapeutic Interchange program can minimize delays in reacting to national medication shortage problems.

2. When one medication is prescribed for another medication approved as having a Therapeutic Interchange, there will be a mechanism in place to alert nursing and/or the prescriber that an interchange is being dispensed.

3. If the pharmacy is closed and the medication is needed prior to the pharmacy’s next day of operation, the Nursing House Supervisor will rewrite orders (or enter via CPOE) as outlined in the Therapeutic Interchange list (current list available in the unit’s Formulary binder, from the pharmacy, from the house supervisor). The dose(s) will be retrieved from the Pyxis, and if a written order, a copy of the prescriber’s order will be left for the pharmacist to verify with an account of what medication was dispensed as a Therapeutic Interchange.

4. The medication administration record will be adjusted to reflect the Therapeutic Interchange medication name and dosing schedule of the specific medication administered.