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We're Here to Help

Advance Care Pharmacy provides an integrated approach to pharmacy-related services. In addition to traditional medications, ACP compounds sterile injectable preparations and other compounds for topical, rectal, and oral administration. Our staff consists of experienced and hospice-trained pharmacists that are available for assistance in suggesting appropriate and cost-effective treatment recommendations. Please note that the discussions and guidance furnished by a pharmacist does not result in a formal order. All prescriptions must be expressed and authorized by a licensed prescriber. The ultimate decision and plan of care is the responsibility of the hospice, medical director, and the prescriber.

Clinical Tips

There are many ways to increase cost savings for your organization, without compromising care. Some suggestions are:

1. **Order higher strength tablets and cut in half.**
Ask a pharmacist if the medication you are ordering can be cut in half. Some tablets (controlled-release) cannot be cut.
2. **Dissolve tablets in water, rather than using expensive liquid formulations.**
Some tablets dissolve easily in water. For example, **Levsin** (hyoscyamine) SL tablets can be placed in 0.5-1ml of water, instead of using Levsin liquid. Also, **KCI** 20mEq tablets dissolve in water. This may take up to 20 minutes, but results in a significant financial savings.

I Feel Your Pain

When treating moderate pain, a good option is **Tylenol w/Codeine #3**. Containing acetaminophen 300mg and codeine 30mg, it is approximately equivalent to a Norco 5/325 tablet. Since it is a Schedule III, it does not have to follow the procedure of emergency fill and authorized signature for refills from the prescriber that Norco has (Schedule II). The nurse/agent of the prescriber can communicate, either orally or electronically, the prescription and a maximum of 5 refills within a 6 month period from the original date. It is inexpensive and tolerated by patients that can take morphine.

Cough and Cold Season

Winter months bring on an increased incidence of respiratory infections. Proper symptom treatment is essential in providing the best care for patients. Often multi-symptom formulations are inappropriate and result in duplication of ingredient use, and potential dangerous doses of medications (i.e., acetaminophen). Some recommendations for symptom treatment include the following:

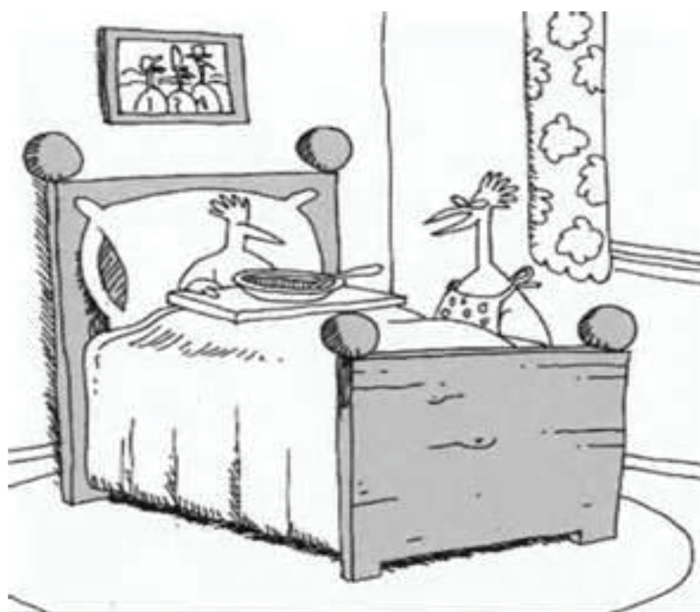
Dry Cough: **Robitussin DM, Phenergan DM, Delsym**

Productive Cough: **Robitussin, guaifenesin** 400mg tablets

Cough/Runny Nose: **Robitussin CF, Claritin OTC, Zyrtec OTC**

Severe Cough: **Robitussin/codeine, Phenergan/codeine**

Proper use of antibiotics is advised. The common cold cannot be treated with antibiotics. If assessment and examination warrant antibiotic use, **amoxicillin, cefdinir** (Omnicef), **azithromycin** (Zithromax, Z-Pak), **amoxicillin/clavulanate** (Augmentin, and **levofloxacin** (Levaquin) are good options, due to bacterial spectrum of activity and cost.



"Quit complaining. For one thing, chicken soup is good for a cold. For another, it's nobody we know."

Terminal Agitation

As patients near the end of life, they may experience profound mood changes. Terminal agitation is often accompanied by mood swings and personality changes, which may leave caregivers feeling helpless. The sudden onset of behavior changes differentiates terminal agitation from personality changes of dementia, which usually occur more gradually. Symptoms of terminal agitation may include anger, despair, combativeness, irritability, nervousness, and sleeping disturbances. Appropriate management of symptoms is important to alleviate undesirable anguish. The goal is to comfort the patient and treat the underlying issues, such as pain, voiding problems (due to catheter, constipation, etc.), emotional and/or spiritual distress, fever, or physical elements (bedding, room temperature, noise). Benzodiazepines, such as **lorazepam** and **diazepam**, may help with symptoms related to anxiety. **Melatonin** has been shown to calm patients and regulate sleep. Additionally, **haloperidol** will treat combativeness and symptoms of aggression. Lastly, **midazolam** may be appropriate for patients with severe symptoms of terminal agitation.

Prescription Price Increases

Please be aware of recent medication price increases. Consider alternatives, whenever possible. Consult the physician or pharmacist for recommendations. Right now, some tips to avoid higher medication costs are using **haloperidol liquid**, rather than the tablets. Instead of nystatin powder/cream, choose the antifungal topicals **clotrimazole** or **miconazole**. Rather than Lomotil (diphenoxylate/atropine), use **loperamide OTC**. **Dexamethasone** 4mg tablets should be ordered for a 2mg dose (0.5 tablet) and 6mg dose (1.5 tablets). Additionally, combination steroid creams/ointments are very costly. Consider **hydrocortisone** 1% or 2.5% (low potency), **triamcinolone** 1% (medium potency), or **mometasone** 0.1% (high potency) for topical anti-inflammatories. Note, that pricing changes frequently, and sometimes dramatically, based on manufacturer supply and demand. Always consult the pharmacy for current medication charges.



Drug Shortages

The following drugs are currently in limited supply, according to the manufacturer:

Transdermal scopolamine patches

Welcome New Hospices

We would like to extend a warm welcome to several new hospices that have contracted ACP for pharmacy services:

Allegiant Hospice
Angels on Earth Hospice
Care Connection Hospice
Care First Hospice
Graceland Hospice
Holy Family Hospice Care
Hospice of the Angels

Love Care Hospice
Love, Trust, Peace Hospice
Monzones Hospice
Optimal Hospice
QualCare Hospice
Premium Hospice
Trusted Care Hospice

Advance Care Pharmacy



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"Your prescription is cheaper if you buy it in bulk."