

# Advance Care Pharmacy

## Fall, 2018 Newsletter

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*As we approach the end of another year, I wanted to let you know how much it means to me that you put your trust in Advance Care Pharmacy for your hospice pharmacy services. As the pharmacy owner, I am grateful for your business and your loyalty to this relationship. ACP strives to go above and beyond what a retail pharmacy can provide. We specialize in hospice and end-of-life care, furnished by experienced pharmacy staff. As the days grow shorter and darkness commences earlier, deliveries become more challenging. Please help us by auditing patient medications and calling in refills at the same time. Multiple deliveries to the same patient increase labor costs and make us less productive. Additionally, stat refills are an unnecessary expense for your agency. We appreciate all that your employees do to cooperate with our requests. Please let me know if there is anything ACP can improve our service to you. I wish you all a healthy and happy holiday season!*

- MARYAM SHARAFSALEH



"It's an experimental drug. We're still testing to see how much customers will pay for it."

### Pain Management Savings

The majority of hospice patients experience some type of pain. It is important to identify the source of the pain, the severity, and what treatments have been tried. Consult the pain management recommendations of your hospice agency and your licensed prescribers for an appropriate regimen. For local pain, we recommend **lidocaine 4% patch** (OTC) or **Aspercreme 4% cream**, instead of the lidocaine 5% patch (Rx). Lidocaine 4%, which is available without a prescription, is significantly less expensive than the 5% dose. Additionally, for chronic pain, when indicated, **fentanyl patches** (Duragesic) are now available at lower prices than they have been in the past.

### Levsin Drops

Mucosal secretions are common in hospice patients with advanced illness. Secretions accumulate due to impaired swallowing and/or shallow breathing, resulting in noisy wet breathing ("death rattle"). There are several medications used for this indication. Among them, Levsin (hyoscyamine) is commonly prescribed and is present in most hospice comfort kits. Hyoscyamine is available as a tablet (including SL, ER, ODT), solution, and elixir. The most inexpensive formulation that ACP dispenses is the SL tablet. For patients having difficulty with the solid dosage form, we recommend preparing an oral solution with the SL tablet. The cost savings of preparing this formulation is significant. Hyoscyamine 0.125mg tablet #15 costs \$17 vs. hyoscyamine 0.125mg/ml oral drops, \$28.00 (same number of doses). The solution must be prepared just prior to each dose. See illustrations for method of preparation.



1. Place one tablet of hyoscyamine in small cup.



2. Crush tablet with pill crusher or spoon.



3. Add 0.5 to 1ml water.



4. Mix until dissolved (about 30 seconds).



5. Draw up solution into 1ml oral syringe and administer to patient.

### Medication Cycling

For patients that require monthly refills for chronic medical conditions, please consider automatic pharmacy refills. ACP can set up routine refills for drugs (non-narcotics) that are expected to continue. Cycling of medications ensures compliance and reduces the amount of time nurses spend calling in refills for ongoing medications. Furthermore, it avoids unnecessary stat and excessive deliveries to the same patient. Please contact Jorge at the pharmacy to schedule this service.



"According to my research, laughter is the best medicine, giggling is good for mild infections, chuckling works for minor cuts and bruises, and snickering only makes things worse."

## Tiger Text and Email

ACP offers several alternative ways to contact the pharmacy without having to use the phone. Our secure HIPAA compliant Tiger Text and email methods of communication are available and have decreased the amount of calls coming into the pharmacy. This in turn, reduces the hold times for callers that actually need to speak to someone at the pharmacy. We appreciate those that are using Tiger Text and email to connect with ACP. Please keep the following in mind when using Tiger Text and email:

1. Make sure you receive a **response** that your message was received. If not, it is possible that the message did not go through. Don't assume anything.
2. Following your message, provide your **name** so that we may follow up if needed.
3. Don't order **STATs** unless you follow up with a telephone call.
4. If you need same day delivery, after 9pm, we suggest you call the pharmacy and not text or email.
5. Consider calling the pharmacy for clinical questions so that you can speak directly to a pharmacist.

## PBM Services

ACP offers Pharmacy Benefit Management (PBM) services for our agencies. Several hospices in the southern California area utilize this assistance with their medication management and are pleased with the outcome. PBM offers control of drug usage that is managed by knowledgeable HOSPICE pharmacy staff. A drug formulary and the clinical expertise of our pharmacists ensure that your agency is not overspending on drug therapy. Furthermore, for patients that reside in long term care (LTC) facilities, and are forced to use the residence pharmacy, there is no regulation over what the residence pharmacy charges hospice for medication. ACP can establish a PBM relationship between the hospice and the patient's pharmacy to supervise the charges, allowing for more transparency in the billing of drugs. If you are interested, please contact Lisa Leon at (760) 489-7040 ext. 322.

## Cold and Flu Season

During the fall and winter months, we experience an increased incidence of cold and flu illnesses. Cooler environmental temperatures, drier air, and back-to-school all contribute to the higher rates of viral transmission. Other medical conditions, such as diabetes, asthma/COPD, and cancer, compromise the immune system and may complicate the risks from the flu. Prevention is the best way to avoid the cold and flu. Frequent hand washing, a nutritious diet (including water), and sleep will help to keep you healthy. Avoiding close contact with those infected with the cold or flu is essential. Unfortunately, many will not escape the virus, and will need medications to alleviate unpleasant symptoms associated with these illnesses. Avoid multi-symptom formulations, since this may result in dangerous doses of some medications, especially if other agents are taken concurrently (i.e., acetaminophen). Furthermore, decongestants, such as pseudoephedrine and oxymetazoline, should be avoided in patients with heart disease. For the treatment of common cold symptoms, consider the following:

Dry Cough: **Robitussin DM, Phenergan DM, Delsym**  
Productive Cough: **Robitussin, guaifenesin 400mg tablets**  
Cough/Runny Nose: **Robitussin CF, Claritin OTC, Zyrtec OTC**  
Nasal Congestion: **Saline spray, Afrin, Sudafed**  
Severe Cough: **Robitussin /codeine, Phenergan/codeine**



## Flu Vaccinations

Influenza vaccines will begin to ship to ACP starting the end of September. For agencies that have placed an order, we will make arrangements for delivery of your supply. Any hospice that has not ordered the flu vaccine, and wishes to, can call to see if we have remaining inventory. Since we began taking orders in April for this year's flu season, we can't guarantee that vaccines will be available to those that did not pre-order. Early orders of the vaccine not only secure your supply, but also guarantee the best pricing available. As we enter flu-season, it is likely that manufacturers and wholesalers may increase the cost of the injection due to supply and demand. Please consider what you may need for next year (2019) and place your vaccine order between September and April, for fulfillment next fall.



## Per Diem Contracts

Hospice agencies are often approached by third party management contractors called pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) to manage their drug spending. Often PBMs don't clearly indicate where charges are being allocated. For example, a PBM will take a portion of the amount hospice pays for each prescription and pay the pharmacy at or just above cost for the drug. This results in the middle-man, or PBM, getting paid a lot for the small service that they provide. ACP offers an alternative to this type of billing, through a per-diem direct contract with the pharmacy. The per-diem contract utilizes a specific drug formulary to reduce drug costs. If you are interested, please contact Lisa Leon at (760) 489-7040 ext. 322.

## Injectable Drug Shortages

The market continues to experience a shortage of many injectable medications. This supply changes without notification from the drug wholesaler due to the availability from the manufacturer. Some shortages take months to recover, if due to a recall or manufacturing delay. Others may reverse more quickly if simply a result of pharmacy allocation. The injectable medications that are currently experiencing low supply are the following:

- **Morphine** injection
- **Clinimix** (TPN formulation)
- **KCl, NaCl**, and other electrolyte solutions

Please call the pharmacy to inquire about certain drugs that may not be available, prior to admitting a patient, that will NEED to continue, once discharged from the hospital or home health agency.

## Drug Pricing

Drug prices change frequently due to several factors. You may notice that the same medication may have different charges from month to month, or possibly within the same month. This is because the acquisition cost of a drug may fluctuate due to the availability of ingredients needed to manufacture the drug. Additionally, the number of generic brands available impacts the price of medications. Lastly, drug recalls result in pharmacies having to purchase alternative generic brands which, in turn, may change the cost of the drug. Advance Care Pharmacy calculates drug charges based on the acquisition cost of the drug, rather than average wholesale price (AWP). AWP is often a falsely elevated charge set by manufacturers and wholesalers. Some pharmacies use this figure to bill prescriptions. Since ACP uses acquisition cost, we save our hospice agencies a significant amount of money. However, we cannot guarantee that a drug charge will be identical each time it is billed.

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"More and more patients are going to the Internet for medical advice. To keep my practice going, I changed my name to Dr. Google."

## Continuing Education

ACP will be offering continuing education for hospice nurses at an upcoming pharmacy sponsored event. The courses that will be presented will include ***Pain Management in Hospice Patients: An Overview; Nausea and Vomiting: Medication Options in End-of-Life Care; and Anxiety in the Terminally Ill.*** There will also be stations for infusion pump and enteral (feeding) pump training and support. We will offer this conference in three central locations in order to service all of our hospice agencies. Space will be limited. Stay tuned for further details.

## Welcome New Hospices

Advance Care Pharmacy provides pharmacy services to over 200 hospice organizations throughout Southern California. We would like to extend a warm welcome to several new hospices that have joined us recently:

A-One Hospice	Divinity Hospice	Nirvana Care Hospice
Absolute Hospice	Foothill Hospice	Oceanview Hospice
Advantage Hospice	Global Hospice	Priority One Hospice
Ardent Hospice	Graceland Hospice	Quality Hospice Care
Ascension Hospice	Heart of Gold	Serenity Hospice
Blendship Hospice	Hospice Care of CA	So Cal Hospice Care
Calstro Hospice	Immanuel Hospice	Tower Healthcare
Corinthian Hospice	Manor Hospice	Unique Hospice
Delta Hospice		

## Advance Care Pharmacy

Specializing in Hospice and Long Term Care

With TWO locations serving all of Southern California:

528 North Broadway

Escondido, CA 92025

**(760) 489-7077**

FAX : (760) 489-7040

[acphospice@advcarerx.com](mailto:acphospice@advcarerx.com)

Hours: 9:00am-1:00am

24 hours on call service

320 Bonnie Circle

Corona, CA 92880

**(951) 256-8800**

FAX: (951) 284-4594

[info@advcarerx.com](mailto:info@advcarerx.com)

Hours: 9:00am-9:00pm

24 hour on call service

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