Medication Competency Exam
Pre-Test Preparation Information

In support of a Union Hospital Critical Success Factor: “Be recognized as a best health system in our class nationally – unsurpassed in our ‘class’ of hospitals for quality safety, satisfaction, and value”, the Center for Education would like to provide you with information on the Pharmacology Competency Exam required of all nurses who administer medications. This exam is only part of our program to assist you in being safe in your practice. The purpose of this exam is not to convey that you are expected to know “everything”. It is intended to help you utilize resources appropriately, apply your knowledge of the 5-Rights of medication administration and demonstrate your understanding of the basic premise that nurses hold for this key element of the profession.

This is a 60 question, multiple choice, computer based exam. If you score 90% or greater on the pre-test (54 or more correct answers), you will be exempted from the test administered during nursing orientation. This is an open book test. You will be provided with a current drug reference book or you may bring your own. A calculator and paper & pencil will be available. No other resources are allowed for the pre-test.

You can take your time. Each question is graded “as you go” thus, if you answer incorrectly you will see the correct answer and rationale. This allows you to review the question before you move on. We suggest that you plan 2 hours so you do not feel rushed.

Content covers:
1. General Medication Administration
   a. 5 Rights of Medication Administration
   b. IM routes of administration (sites and needle size)
   c. Administration routes (PO, IV, IM, SQ, gastric tube, eye drops)
   d. Military Time
   e. Pain management
   f. Appropriate Compounds: Meds you can/cannot crush
   g. Safe administration practices – avoiding errors

2. Calculations:
   a. IV drip calculations: Simple rate/volume; weight based drips; timed volume infusions.
   b. Oral drug calculations: Determining how many tablets/capsules are needed for an ordered dose. Pediatric dosages based on patient weight.

3. Medication Categories: Indications, Dosages, Side Effects, Antidotes (if applicable), associated lab tests, allergies. (this is not an inclusive list)
   c. Insulin: Types, onset, peak, administration
   d. Antibiotics
   e. Narcotics
   f. Diuretics
   g. Cardiovascular (examples: ACE Inhibitors, antiarrhythmics)
   h. Anti-coagulants

The ability to utilize a drug reference book to look for the needed information is part of the underlying purpose for this being open-book. You have references available to you on all nursing units in many formats. We do not want you administering medications that are not familiar to you and it is impossible to know them all! So, using your reference material is a critical element for safe medication administration.

If you do not achieve 90% or greater on the pre-test, you will take the test during nursing orientation. The “grade as you go” format lets you review your test with each question so please take the opportunity to do that. If you have questions not addressed by this information, you may contact the Center for Education at 812-238-7535.