Reducing Medication Errors in Acute Care and Long Term Care Facilities

The Coalition’s first initiative built on work by the Massachusetts Hospital Association to inventory current inpatient medication practices in Massachusetts hospitals, use a Consensus Group to recommend short and long-term Best Practices, promote Best Practice adoption through education and leadership support, and then re-survey to determine hospital progress. The effort marked the first time in the country hospitals voluntarily developed safety practices, measured their progress, and reported on it publicly. The Coalition continues to support medication safety, issuing medication Safety First Alerts (clinician-oriented tips on various topics), and publishing a Patient Guide, Your Role in Safe Medication Use.

Highlights of activities undertaken as part of the Medication Error Prevention Project included:

- **Developing and Disseminating MHA/Coalition Best Practice Recommendations to Reduce Medication Errors in the Inpatient Setting – National Model**
  - Conducted an inventory of current practice
  - Established a consensus group and developed short and long-term best practices
  - Supported the implementation of best practices with hospitals voluntarily adopting these safeguards to improve medication safety
  - Determined hospital progress via a resurvey to assess adoption of best practices, with results made available to the public (Medication error prevention project: survey of hospital progress)
    - Snapshot in time - 97% made a good start with 70% fully implementing at least some best practices – improvement is continuous
    - Collaborative, voluntary approach can make a difference
  - Continue to encourage implementation of short and long term best practices and share lessons to further accelerate improvements

- **Developing Medication Safety First Alerts, tips for clinicians, on:**
  - Wrong-route errors
  - Improving prescription/order writing
  - Errors in transcribing and administering medications
  - Look-alike/sound-alike medication errors

- **Producing “Your Role in Safe Medication Use” Patient Guide (also available in Spanish)**
  - Writing assistance received from the institute for family-centered care. Patients, families, and health professionals served as advisors to the project.
  - Distributed approximately 550,000 brochures to hospitals, health centers, health care providers, health care organizations, health insurers, individuals, etc. In Massachusetts, across the country, and internationally.
  - Planning the 4th reprint of brochure due to high continued interest

- **Extending of Medication Error Best Practices to Long-Term Care Facilities**
  - One Coalition member, the MA Department of Public Health, has promoted adoption of a modified set of Best Practices at long-term care facilities.
    - **Best Practice Recommendation #1 - Assessment of the Medication Knowledge of Individuals Administering Medications in Long Term Care Facilities.**
    - **Best Practice Recommendation #2: Methods to facilitate the appropriate administration of morphine sulfate**
      - Morphine Sulfate Conversion Charts for SC & IM Administration
      - Oral Morphine Sulfate Conversion Charts
      - Morphine Sulfate Available in the LTCF Emergency Kit

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