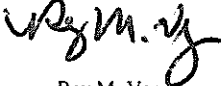


**GUAM MEMORIAL HOSPITAL AUTHORITY  
MEDICAL RECORDS DEPARTMENT MANUAL**

<b>APPROVED BY:</b>   Rey M. Vega Hospital Administrator/CEO	<b>RESPONSIBILITY:</b>  HIMC, Nursing, Professional Support, Medical Staff	<b>EFFECTIVE DATE:</b>  January 19, 2012	<b>POLICY NO.</b>  6433-75	<b>PAGE</b>  1 of 3
<b>TITLE: USE OF ABBREVIATIONS, ACRONYMS, SYMBOLS, AND DOSE DESIGNATIONS</b>				
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**INTRODUCTION:**

Abbreviations are used to lighten the burden of clinical record documentation. Abbreviations, acronyms, symbols, and dose designations are a convenience, time saver, space saver, and a way of avoiding repetition of words and phrases. However, they can also be misunderstood, misread, or interpreted incorrectly. As a result, they have the potential to contribute to error.

National safety organizations and accrediting bodies in health care such as the Institute for Safe Medication Practices, the National Coordinating Council for Medication Error Reporting and Prevention and The Joint Commission recommend that health care organizations formulate a list of error-prone abbreviations to be eliminated from clinical record documentation. They also recommend that health care organizations use standardized abbreviations, acronyms, symbols, and dose designations. The use of an approved or accepted list of abbreviations, acronyms, symbols, and dose designations is also a clinical record documentation standard. This policy references the Guam Memorial Hospital's approved list as well as those abbreviations, acronyms, symbols, and dose designations that are not approved for use.

**POLICY:**

The use of abbreviations by persons making entry into the clinical record must be consistent with the following rules:

A. General Use of Approved Abbreviations

1. Only the approved medical abbreviations may be used. To be considered "approved" the abbreviation, acronym, symbol, or dose designation must be listed in the most recent edition of *Stedman's Medical Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Symbols* book. This listing may be accessed via:
  - a. Reference book in the Medical Records department; and
  - b. Online at <http://www.stedmanonline.com>
2. Abbreviations shall be avoided in the development and use of patient education materials; and should not be used on informed consent forms and in procedure titles.
3. The person who uses an abbreviation must take responsibility for making sure it is properly interpreted.

B. Unapproved Abbreviations

A list of unapproved or error-prone abbreviations and dose designations is listed in the table below. These abbreviations shall not be used in:

1. The patient’s medical record when referencing medications.
2. In any handwritten patient-specific communication referencing medications.
3. In medication orders, medication administration records, labels for drug storage bins and shelves, preprinted orders and protocols, or in other printed or electronic documentation used.

<b>Official “Do Not Use” List<sup>1</sup></b>		
<b>Do Not Use</b>	<i>Potential Problem</i>	<b>Use Instead</b>
U (unit)	Mistaken for “0” (zero), the number “4” (four) or “cc”	Write "unit"
IU (International Unit)	Mistaken for IV (intravenous) or the number 10 (ten)	Write "International Unit"
Q.D., QD, q.d., qd (daily)	Mistaken for each other Period after the Q mistaken for "I" and the "O" mistaken for "I"	Write "daily"
Q.O.D., QOD, q.o.d, qod (every other day)		Write "every other day"
Trailing zero (X.0 mg)*	Decimal point is missed	Write X mg
Lack of leading zero (.X mg)		Write 0.X mg
MS	Can mean morphine sulfate or magnesium sulfate	Write "morphine sulfate"
M <sub>SO</sub> <sub>4</sub> and MgSO <sub>4</sub>	Confused for one another	Write "magnesium sulfate"
<p><sup>1</sup> Applies to all orders and all medication-related documentation that is handwritten (including free-text computer entry) or on pre-printed forms.</p> <p><b>*Exception:</b> A “trailing zero” may be used only where required to demonstrate the level of precision of the value being reported, such as for laboratory results, imaging studies that report size of lesions, or catheter/tube sizes. It may not be used in medication orders or other medication-related documentation.</p>		

C. Use of Abbreviations in Orders

Medication orders must comply with the following rules:

1. Medication orders must be written in plain English without the use of unapproved abbreviations or dose designations.
2. If unapproved abbreviations or dose designations are found in a medication order, the order must be verified with the prescribing individual prior to being implemented.

**REFERENCES:**

Institute of Safe Medication Practices: <http://www.ismp.org/>

The Joint Commission: <http://www.jointcommission.org>

National Coordinating Council for Medication Error and Prevention:  
<http://www.nccmerp.org/council2002-06-11.html>

**RESCINDED POLICIES:**

*GMHA Administrative Manual Policy No. 6433-1, Abbreviations, made effective May 15, 1991.*

*GMHA Medical Records Manual Policy No. 6433-75, Unacceptable Abbreviations, made effective January 15, 2009.*

**RELATED POLICIES:**

GMHA Pharmacy Manual Policy No. 701, Medication Orders.