

Manager's Guide: Transcribing

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For further details, contact us on:

 0333 939 0053  info@opuspharmserve.com W: www.opuspharmserve.com

What is transcribing?

To transcribe means “to make a written copy” and the key here is in the word “copy”. Where medicines are concerned, to transcribe onto the MAR sheet means to make an exact copy of the information on the medicines label on the MAR sheet.

Why might you need to transcribe?

There are many circumstances where you may need to transcribe additional information from a medicines label onto the MAR sheet, including:

- ✓ Dose changes;
- ✓ Discontinued medicines;
- ✓ Addition of new medicines;
- ✓ Following a doctor’s visit;
- ✓ Discharge medicines

How can it go wrong?

You’re thinking....”If it’s just a case of copying a label, what is so difficult?

ANSWER: Lots!!

Judging by the errors and mistakes we have seen in our 30 years as Pharmacists, lots of different things can go wrong, leading to potentially serious consequences.

When staff copy details onto a MAR sheet they may be in a rush, in a noisy environment, in a situation where there are numerous interruptions etc. and mistakes are therefore quite common.

How can I reduce the chances of making a mistake?

Before undertaking any transcribing task, make sure you remember **E.T.C:**

ENVIRONMENT

It is vital that you find an appropriate environment in which to transcribe

- ✓ Find a quiet, calm area free of noise and interruption
- ✓ Shut the door and concentrate

TEXT

- ✓ Check the label you are about to transcribe to ensure you understand fully the meaning of the text and what you are required to transcribe
- ✓ Write the words clearly and accurately on the MAR sheet

CHECK

Once you have transcribed the relevant information:

- ✓ Double check your transcription for typos, spelling mistakes or unclear writing
- ✓ Find a suitably trained colleague or manager to double check your work

Areas of risk

Examples of common errors include where:

1. A change needs to be made to a medicine and the wrong medicine is amended;
2. The medicine has 2 different strengths and the wrong strength is amended;
3. The timing of the medicine has not been indicated on the MAR sheet correctly and there is not a sufficient gap between doses;
4. Dose changes are not clear as handwriting is not neat and tidy;
5. Dose changes are not understood as they haven't been indicated clearly enough;
6. Cautions have not been added e.g. after food or swallow whole;
7. PRN (when required) medicines have not been written clearly;
8. The person handwriting on the MAR sheet has not signed or dated the entry;
9. Discontinued medicines are not clearly indicated so may be given in error;
10. Liquid strengths are not understood e.g. 10mg/5ml or 100mg/5ml;

Human behaviours can be separated into different categories, to which certain errors can be attributed. One human behaviour model categorises behaviours as:

- Knowledge-based behaviours
- Rule-based behaviours
- Skill-based behaviours

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HOW TO GET IT RIGHT:

To ensure any transcribing undertaken by staff is clear, accurate and, most importantly, safe, it is vital that you:

- ⇒ Select senior staff you trust
- ⇒ Train them to transcribe safely
- ⇒ Assess their competency

Top 10 tips for transcribing

1. Always write medicines names in CAPITALS –there is much less likelihood for error as capitals are easier to read
2. Always write dosages in WORDS not figures i.e. ONE to be taken THREE times a day (not 1x3 times a day)
3. Don't write AM or PM for morning and evening as this is confusing e.g. Take ONE in the MORNING and TWO at NIGHT is easier to read than 1 AM and 2 PM as the 2 PM could be confused with the time)
4. If you have to write a dosage e.g.10 units-always write the word UNITS (not un or U or IU) e.g 10 UNITS is very clear whereas 10 IU (10 international units) could look like 101 units if written this way.
5. If there is more than one MAR sheet, then number them as 1 of 3, 2 of 3, 3 of 3 etc. Mistakes can be made if staff only look at the first MAR sheet and don't realise there are medicines to give on subsequent sheets.
6. Always use a zero before a decimal point when writing a volume or strength e.g. 0.5ml should be written as 0.5ml not .5ml as this can easily be confused with 5ml (10 times the amount). The same applies for strengths e.g. warfarin 0.5mg and 5mg tablets can be confused if they are not written clearly.

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7. Be aware of the units-milligram (mg) and mcg (microgram)- a milligram is 1000 times stronger than a microgram! Sometimes you will see a particular medicine's strength written in different ways e.g. Digoxin 0.125mg is the same as Digoxin 125mcg. As best practice, the microgram amount should be written (i.e. the number without a decimal point) and the word **microgram** should be written in full.
8. Write neatly, complete your entry and double check it before getting a trained witness to do a final check
9. Be aware of duplicate entries on MAR sheets particularly where the brand and generic names are not at all alike e.g. sodium valproate and Epilim or carbamazepine and Tegetol.
10. Check your spelling-many drug names are very similar e.g. Lamictal and Lamisil and Lorazepam and Lormetazepam.

5 WAYS OPUS CAN HELP:

1. Book your staff onto an Opus Transcribing course today!
2. An Opus Pharmacist will competency assess your staff during the course
3. For future competency assessments, consider using the Opus online Advanced Competency Assessment which looks at MAR sheets and labels and asks staff to confirm if they would give the medicine or not considering the information they have been given
4. Consider purchasing some bite-sized distance learning workbooks on particular topic areas for staff e.g. administration of warfarin, buccal midazolam etc
5. Download our free resources from our website www.opuspharmserve.com -this includes a free competency assessment tool, audit tool and PRN protocol.