SAFE ADMINISTRATION OF VINCA ALKALOID DRUGS

No Longer Applicable
Withdrawn July 2017
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1. Background

**Vinca alkaloids must NEVER be administered intrathecally.**

**Fatalities** have occurred when vinca alkaloids have been administered intrathecally.¹

This policy was initially developed in response to the National Medication Safety Alert arising from a fatal incident due to the incorrect administration of vincristine (a vinca alkaloid drug) by the intrathecal route.²

While any medication administered via the incorrect route can result in harm, the inadvertent intrathecal administration of vinca alkaloids results in death or permanent disability in the majority of cases.³⁴

The inadvertent intrathecal administration of intravenous chemotherapy, including vinca alkaloids, remains a potential risk.¹ This policy aims to ensure the safe administration of vinca alkaloid drugs outlining the minimum standards for the prescribing, dispensing, preparation, administration and transport of vinca alkaloid drugs.

This guideline should be used in conjunction with existing cytotoxic chemotherapy policies and the related policy for the Safe Administration of Intrathecal Chemotherapy and High Risk Medications.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all Western Australian public health services and private healthcare facilities contracted to provide care to public patients where vinca alkaloid drugs are prescribed, dispensed and administered. This policy is strongly recommended to all private healthcare providers in WA.

Health Service Managers and Clinical Directors are advised to bring this revised policy to the attention of staff to ensure its prompt implementation within their jurisdiction.

All Department of Health clinicians (medical, nursing and pharmacy) providing health services on behalf of the Department of Health must comply with this policy in prescribing, dispensing, preparing and administering vinca alkaloid drugs within the Department of Health or Department of Health funded services.
3. Definitions

| Vinca alkaloids                  | A class of anticancer drugs which includes vinblastine, vincristine, vinflunine and vinorelbine. |
| Minibag                           | A small volume intravenous infusion bag, usually containing 50mL or 100mL of sterile fluid. |
| Extravasation                     | Accidental leakage of an intravenous solution from the vein into the surrounding tissue space resulting in injury. |

4. Policy statement

4.1 Prescribing

- In accordance with the Clinical Oncological Society of Australia guidelines, vinca alkaloids must only be prescribed by medical practitioners with appropriate skills, training and qualifications in the management of cancer.\(^3\)

- Dosing of vinca alkaloids must be calculated by a medical practitioner skilled in this task.

- The total milligram dose of vinca alkaloid to be added to the minibag must be verified by a chemotherapy competent pharmacist and the chemotherapy competent registered nurse administering the dose.

4.2 Preparation and dispensing

- Vinca alkaloid drugs must be prepared in a minibag of compatible solution, NOT IN A SYRINGE.\(^1\)

- Vinca alkaloids must be prepared and supplied in a minibag containing a total volume of 50mL or more.

- All vinca alkaloids should be labelled clearly with the warning ‘FOR INTRAVENOUS USE ONLY – Fatal if given by other routes.’\(^1\)

- Vinca alkaloids should NOT be prepared at the same time in the same location as medicines that are intended for intrathecal administration.

- Vinca alkaloids must only be prepared and dispensed by appropriately trained staff who have been assessed as competent to prepare and dispense chemotherapy.
4.3 Administration

- Vinca alkaloids must never be administered intrathecally.

- Vinca alkaloids must only be administered by appropriately trained staff who have been assessed as competent to administer chemotherapy.

- Staff administering vinca alkaloids must be aware of the risk of extravasation and ensure procedures for preventing, monitoring for, and treating extravasation are followed.

- Immediately prior to the administration of a vinca alkaloid the patient’s name, name of the medication, dose, route of administration, date and time of administration, expiration date of the medication and patient allergies must be checked by two registered nurses with appropriate training and skills. Where a second nurse is not available then a pharmacist or medical practitioner with appropriate knowledge and skills should perform this function.

- Vinca alkaloids must NEVER be administered using a motorised pump. They should be administered using gravity to reduce the chance of extravasation injuries.

- Administration lines used for the intravenous administration of vinca alkaloid chemotherapy should be clearly labelled in accordance with the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Healthcare, National Recommendations for User-applied Labelling of Injectable Medicines, Fluids and Lines.
  
  o The route of administration must be identified on all administration lines.  
  o The date and time that the line is required to be changed must be identified.

4.4 Staff training

- The prescribing, dispensing, preparation or administration of vinca alkaloids should only be carried out by staff with appropriate training, knowledge and skills in cancer chemotherapy.

- Every health care facility should have a procedure in place to ensure that all staff involved in the prescribing, dispensing, preparation or administration of vinca alkaloids are trained, accredited and authorised to manage chemotherapy.

- Every health care facility should have a procedure in place to ensure all inexperienced staff that will be involved in the prescribing, dispensing,
preparation or administration of vinca alkaloids receive appropriate training and supervision before being left to carry out these tasks.

5. Roles and responsibilities

5.1 Health service managers and clinical directors

- To bring this document to the attention of all medical, pharmacy and nursing staff.
- To ensure that local policies and procedures comply with the requirements of this policy.

5.2 Clinical staff involved in the prescribing, dispensing, preparation or administration of vinca alkaloid drugs

- To comply with the requirements of this policy.
- To follow local protocol/guidelines relating to the prescribing, dispensing, preparation or administration of vinca alkaloid drugs.
- To maintain an appropriate knowledge and competency relevant to area of practice.

6. Evaluation and Monitoring

- Health service managers and clinical directors are responsible for ensuring that regular audits are carried out and evaluated to verify compliance with the policy.
- Results from auditing and evaluation should be relayed back to staff, to assist in promoting successful change management.

7. References


8. Relevant legislation

- *Poisons Regulations 1965.*

9. Related documents


10. Authority

| Title: | Safe Administration of Vinca Alkaloid Drugs |
| Contact: | Office of the Chief Medical Officer: Project Coordinator- Western Australian Medication Safety Group |
| Directorate: | Office of the Chief Medical Officer | Clinical Services and Research |
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