

# News of Health

## Patients Can Play A Role In Medication Error Prevention

(NAPS)—By understanding how medication errors occur, hospitals may be able to help protect against patient harm.

The U.S. Pharmacopeia (USP) has created a tool for hospitals to report and track medication errors in a standardized format. The program allows facilities to identify processes that result in improved medication use systems and higher quality patient care. Med-MARx<sup>SM</sup> (pronounced med-marks) is a program developed through the experience of the USP Practitioners' Reporting Network.

"USP has identified medication error reporting and prevention as a major focus to impact the public health," said Diane D. Cousins, R.Ph., vice president for practitioner and product experience. "We have created Med-MARx, an Internet-accessible database as a risk-reduction tool for hospitals to anonymously report, track, and compare medication error data."

Since 1820, USP has established quality standards for medicines in the U.S. Today's Pharmacopeia provides standards for more than 3,700 drugs and dosage forms for medicines and dietary supplements.

A medication error is preventable. It may cause or lead to inappropriate medication use or even patient harm. An error can happen when the medication is in the control of the health care professional or the patient.

When consumers use a medicine or help others use their medicines, they become part of the "drug therapy chain." USP has established the following ten tips



on medication safety to help consumers take an active role in the drug therapy chain:

1. Talk with your doctor about your prescription.
2. Make sure you can read the prescription you receive from your doctor or health care provider.
3. Understand what illness the drug is treating.
4. Check the label when you get your prescription.
5. Ask your pharmacist to explain the drug and how it works.
6. Ask your pharmacist for printed information about your prescription.
7. When you get a refill, make sure it is the same drug.
8. Keep records of your medications.
9. You may want to purchase a drug information guidebook.
10. If you are sight impaired, ask for assistance from your pharmacist.

More information about medication error reporting is available at [www.usp.org](http://www.usp.org).