

Health Bulletin



Preventing Medication Errors In Radiological Services

(NAPSA)—With over 300 million radiological procedures performed in the U.S. each year and “X-ray” and “MRI” now household terms, a trip to radiological services may seem trivial to many people. However, don’t take these visits lightly. There is a high percentage of harmful medication errors associated with visiting such diagnostic and treatment centers.

In fact, the percentage of harmful medication errors reported in radiological services is seven times higher than many other types of medication errors, according to the 2004 MEDMARX® Data Report of medication errors published by the United States Pharmacopeia (USP).

Are You At Risk?

So, how does a simple X-ray put you at risk? First, radiological services are not just about performing X-rays anymore. These services have grown to include the cardiac catheterization laboratory and nuclear medicine as well as diagnostic tests such as lung scans and MRIs. Radiology staff also drain abscesses, insert gastric feeding tubes and open blood vessels (angioplasties). These are all complicated procedures and 20 percent involve the use of a radiological pharmaceutical, a drug used to create contrast in the body that is detectable by imaging devices.

In addition, there can be a breakdown in the “continuity of care” when a patient goes to radiology.

Patients often circulate through this area without adequate com-



U.S. Pharmacopeia

*The Standard of Quality*SM 

Inform radiological services staff of all your allergies.

communication between radiology staff and the providers who have been caring for them.

The Good News

Fortunately, consumers can take steps to help prevent harmful medication errors during visits to radiological services.

1. Always keep an up-to-date list of all your medications and dietary supplements in your wallet.

2. Inform radiological services staff and your health care providers of all your allergies.

3. When you are moved within the hospital, ask where you’re going and why.

4. When you go to radiological services, make sure your medical chart goes with you.

5. For outpatients, make sure you understand the home preparation instructions for your procedure. If you don’t understand, call your health care provider.

6. Have a family member or friend in the hospital with you to