

<b>Title:</b> Clinical Documentation Abbreviations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Policy</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Procedure</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>SOP</b>
<b>Category:</b> Patient Care Services <b>Dept/Prog/Service:</b> Documentation	<b>Distribution:</b> Organization Wide
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**1. PURPOSE**

Standardize abbreviations used at Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre (the Hospital).

**2. POLICY STATEMENT**

Abbreviations carry a significant risk of misinterpretation and pose a risk to patients, and the Hospital. Documentation involving abbreviations will follow the outlined principles.

**3. SCOPE**

Applies to all staff, professional staff and learners.

**4. PRINCIPLES**

- 4.1.** A clear defined list of abbreviations that **cannot** be used throughout the Hospital in documentation has been created (See Appendix A).
- 4.2.** Clinical abbreviations if used must follow principles outlined in "Dictionary of Medical Acronyms & Abbreviations" by Stanley Jablonski.
- 4.3.** If an abbreviation is used it must be easily understandable by the context of the sentence across all disciplines (e.g. Nursing, Physiotherapists, Physicians). If it is not understandable in the context used, then it must be spelled out.
  - 4.3.1.** If an abbreviation is to be used multiple times in a document, the first application must be spelled out, followed by parenthesis of the abbreviation.
- 4.4.** Clinicians will refrain from utilizing abbreviations on consent forms or the description of procedures.
- 4.5.** Clinicians will avoid using drug name abbreviations.
- 4.6.** Do not use drug dose abbreviations (appendix B).
- 4.7.** If abbreviations are necessary on a pre-printed form (e.g. flow sheets) an abbreviation legend must be included.

**5. REFERENCES**


Stanley Jablonski - Dictionary of Medical Acronyms & Abbreviations. Edition 6, copyright 2009  
 ISMP – Institute for Safe Medication Practices Canada  
 Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre: Abbreviations, Use of. ADM-0041 revised: 04/04/2013

## APPENDIX A

### Abbreviations, Dose Expressions, and Symbols that are **NOT TO BE USED**.

The following table includes abbreviations, dose expressions and symbols that are **NOT TO BE USED** because they can be easily misinterpreted.

Abbreviation	Intended Meaning	Problem	Correction
U or u	Unit	Mistaken as the number 0 or 4, causing a 10-fold overdose or greater (e.g., 4U seen as “40” or 4u seen as “44”); Mistaken as “cc” so dose given in volume instead of unit (e.g., 4u seen as 4cc)	Use “unit”
IU	International Unit	Mistaken for IV (intravenous or 10)	Use “units”
Abbreviations for drug names		Misinterpreted because of similar abbreviations for multiple drugs; e.g., MS, MSO4 (morphine sulphate) MgSO4 (magnesium sulphate)	Do not abbreviate drug names
q.d. or QD	Every Day	Mistaken as q.i.d, especially if the period after the “q” or the tail of the “q” is misunderstood as an “l”	Use “daily”
q.o.d. or QOD	Every other day	Mistaken as “q.d.” (daily) or “q.i.d.” (four times a day) if the “o” is poorly written	Use “every other day”
o.d. or OD	Once daily	Mistaken as “right eye” (OD – oculus dexter) leading to oral liquid medications administered to the eye	Use “daily”
OD, OS, OU	Right eye, left eye, each eye	Mistaken as AD,AS,AU (right ear, left ear, each ear)	Use “right eye”, “left eye” or “each eye”
D/C	Discharge or Discontinue	Premature discontinuation of medications if D/C (intended to mean “discharge”) has been misinterpreted as “discontinued” when followed by a list of discharge medications.	Use “discontinue” and “discharge”
cc	Cubic centimeters	Mistaken for “u” (units)	Use “mL”
µg	Microgram	Mistaken as “mg”	Use “mcg”
AD, AS, AU	Right ear, left ear, each ear	Mistaken as OD,OS,OU (right eye, left eye, each eye)	Use “right ear”, “left ear” or “each ear”
BT	Bedtime	Mistaken as “BID” (twice daily)	Use “bedtime”
IJ	Injection	Mistaken as “IV”	Use “injection”
IN	Intranasal	Mistaken as “IM” or “IV”	Use intranasal” or “NAS”
hs	At bedtime	Mistaken as half-strength	Use “bedtime”
HS	Half-strength	Mistaken as bedtime	Use” half strength”
OJ	Orange juice	Mistaken as OD or OS (right or left eye); drugs meant to be diluted in orange juice may be given in eye	Use “orange Juice”

Abbreviation	Intended Meaning	Potential Problem	Correction
per os	By mouth, orally	The "os" can be mistaken as "left eye" (OS-oculus)	Use "PO" (by mouth) or "orally"
qhs	Nightly at bedtime	Mistaken as "qhr" or every hour	Use "nightly"
qn	Nightly or at bedtime	Mistaken as "qh" (every hour)	Use "nightly" or "at bedtime"
q1d	Daily	Mistaken as "q.i.d"	Use "daily"
Q6PM, etc.	Every evening at 6 PM	Mistaken as every 6 hours	Use "daily at 6 pm or "6 PM daily"
SC, SQ, sub q	Subcutaneous	Sc mistaken as SL (sublingual); SQ mistaken as "5 every"	Use "subcut" or "subcutaneously"
ss	Sliding scale (insulin	Mistaken as "55"	Use "sliding scale"
SSRI	Sliding scale regular insulin	Mistaken as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor	Use "sliding scale (insulin)"
l/d	One daily	Mistaken as "tid"	Use "1 daily"
TIW or tiw	3 times a week	Mistaken as "3 times a day" or "twice in a week"	Use "3 times weekly"
UD	As directed	Mistaken as unit dose	Use "as directed"
@	At	Mistaken for "2"	Use "at"
X3d	For three days	Mistaken as "3 doses"	Use "for three days"
/ (slash mark)	Separates two doses or indicates "per"	Mistaken as the number 1 (e.g., "25 units/10 units" misread as "25 units and 110 units")	Use "per" rather than a slash mark to separate doses
<	Less than	Mistaken as opposite of intended	Use "greater than" or "less than"
>	Greater than		
&	And	Mistaken as "2"	Use "and"
+	Plus or and	Mistaken as "4"	Use "and"
°	Hour	Mistaken as a zero	Use "hr" or "hour"
℥	Dram	Mistaken as a "3"	Use the metric system
	Minim	Mistaken as "mL"	Use the metric system
ϕ or ø	Zero, null sign	Mistaken as numerals 4, 6, 8	Use 0 or zero

**APPENDIX B**

**Drug dose designations that should be avoided**

<b>Dose Designations</b>	<b>Intended Meaning</b>	<b>Potential Problem</b>	<b>Correction</b>
Trailing zero after decimal (e.g., 1.0 mg)	1 mg	Mistaken as 10 mg if the decimal point is not seen	Do not use trailing zeros for doses
Lack of leading zero (e.g., .5 mg)	0.5 mg	Mistaken as 5 mg if the decimal point is not seen	Use zero before a decimal point when the dose is less than 1
Drug name and dose run together (especially problematic for drug names that end in "l")	Inderal 40 mg  Tegretol 300 mg	Mistaken as Inderal 140 mg  Mistaken as Tegretol 1300 mg	Place adequate space between the drug name, dose and unit of measure
Numerical dose and unit of measure run together (e.g., 10 mg, 100 ml)	10 mg 100 ml	The "m" is sometimes mistaken as a zero or two zeros, risking a 10x fold overdose	Place adequate space between the dose and unit of measure