

NURSING SERVICE GUIDELINES GENERAL

Guideline: Utilization of controlled substances



Policy Number Superseded: 3364-110-05-05

Responsibility:

Effective Date:

January 20, 2026

Purpose of Guidelines: To establish safe and consistent guidelines for the utilization and management of controlled substances by nursing personnel. The use of controlled substances is regulated by the Ohio Revised Code and Public Law #01-513, The Controlled Substance Act of 1970 and enforced by the Drug Enforcement Agency.

Initial Effective Date:

January 20, 2026

Definitions:

Controlled substances: Drugs classified under federal and state law into Schedules I-V based on potential for abuse, medical use, and dependence liability.

Schedule I: High potential for abuse no accepted medical use in the United States.

Example: heroin.

Schedule II: High potential for abuse, accepted medical use with severe restrictions; abuse may lead to severe dependence. **Example:** oxycodone, meperidine.

Schedule III: Less potential for abuse than drugs I or II; accepted medical use; moderate/low physical dependence or high psychological dependence. **Example:** acetaminophen with codeine (#3).

Schedule IV: Low potential for abuse relative to III; accepted medical use; limited dependence.

Example: diazepam.

Guideline:

Utilization of controlled substances

2

Schedule V: Low potential for abuse relative to IV; accepted medical use; limited dependence.

Example: certain antitussives with codeine.

Automated Drug Cabinet (ADC): Any electronic/automated medication dispensing/storage cabinet (e.g., Pyxis) utilized outside the institutional pharmacy that stores controlled substances.

Procedure:

- (A) Controlled substances in Schedule I and II and selected drugs in Schedule III, IV and V must be maintained in locked quarters. These selected drugs are determined at the discretion of the pharmacy department.
- (B) Each nursing unit will have a standard stock of drugs in the ADC, which is available on the unit.
- (C) Nursing will inventory and verify the correct count of specified controlled substances designated by the Pharmacy once a month.
- (D) Requests for drugs other than the established basic stock must be accompanied by a copy of the physician's order before the drug will be released for removal from the ADC.
- (E) Controlled substances must be obtained from the pharmacy by a registered nurse (RN) or other approved licensed personnel or sent securely to the nursing unit via the pneumatic tube system in accordance with Inpatient pharmacy protocol. The receiving RN or approved licensed personnel must display a valid UPMC identification badge with photo verification. Upon receipt, the authorized individual must sign, date and record the time on the control sheet or electronic record provided by the pharmacy.
- (F) With any evidence of disruption of tamper-resistant devices, the controlled substance should be returned to the pharmacy at once and a count variance report initiated.
- (G) Discrepancies in the shift inventory should be investigated and reconciled by nursing leadership by the end of each shift. Any unresolved discrepancy must have a patient safety net event initiated.
- (H) Wastage of controlled substances must be performed in the ADC or documented on the appropriate form. One RN or authorized personnel shall complete the waste of the medication and a second RN, or authorized personnel serves as a witness to the discard. This process applies to patient-controlled analgesia (PCA) and narcotic infusions. Waste will be defined as partial doses of medication or contaminated doses not administered to the patient.

Guideline:

Utilization of controlled substances

3

- (I) Multiple use of single use units (i.e., Tubex cartridges, single tablets, or unit dose liquids) is strictly prohibited.

Approved by:

*Kurt Kless, MSN, MBA, RN, NE-BC
Chief Nursing Officer*

Initial effective date:

January 20, 2026

Review/Revision Completed by:

*Pierre Maldonado BSN, RN, CCRN,
NE-BC - Nursing Director- Critical Care*

Review/revision date:

-

Next review date:

January 20, 2029