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MEDICATION ERRORS FACT SHEET

- A medication error is any preventable event that may cause or lead to inappropriate medication use or patient harm.
- Medication errors should not be confused with adverse drug reactions — excessive response to a medicine that is unexpected and undesired.
- Medication errors may account for one in 12 hospital admissions, one in eight emergency room visits, and occur once every 100 times drugs are administered in the hospital. A small percentage of errors are serious and may lead to injury or death. (Source: American Society of Health-System Pharmacists and *Modern Healthcare*, 1995)
- Medication errors may be committed (or contributed to) by anyone who handles medicine, including physicians, nurses, pharmacists, patients and their caregivers.
- Types of medication errors include:
 - Doctor's handwriting is misread
 - Abbreviation is misinterpreted
 - Two similarly named drugs are confused
 - Similar-looking packages containing different drugs are switched
 - A concentrated drug is used in place of a diluted dose
 - Dosage directions are not clear resulting in doses that are too much, too little, or given at the wrong time

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The Pharmacy Society of Wisconsin (PSW) is a 1,800 member professional association that represents pharmacy practitioners in all aspects of pharmacy, including hospitals, chain pharmacies, independent pharmacies, long-term care facilities, home care and other components of health care. PSW provides leadership in education, advocacy and innovative services which optimize patient care through the utilization and support of rational drug therapy as a primary resource in a changing health care environment.