**Description**

Oxytocin is a high-alert medication. When used to start or advance labour the administration of oxytocin has been identified as a high-risk area of practice. The mismanagement of IV oxytocin is HIROC’s second highest ranked claim theme for acute organizations. Inadequate and inconsistent discussions with the pregnant person surrounding IV oxytocin is a common contributing factor in related medical-legal claims. To help mitigate these challenges, a resource was developed to support health care providers (HCPs) and pregnant individuals to start an informed conversation about the use of oxytocin to start or advance labour. The resource was developed by a pan-Canadian advisory panel of patients, families, HCPs, patient safety and other experts.

**Actions Taken**

- Performed an environmental scan, literature review, and multi-incident analysis of oxytocin incidents.
- Established a pan-Canadian Advisory panel to support the development of the resource.
- Tested the resource with patients and HCPs, using a quality improvement approach.
- Revised the content and disseminated the resource nationally on World Patient Safety Day 2021.

**Summary of Results**

- Results of pan-Canadian testing (n=61):
  - 100% of patients and over 70% of HCPs found this patient handout to be useful
  - 78% of HCPs found the handout easy to understand.
- Reflections: language matters when discussing risks associated with IV oxytocin.
- Endorsement from 12 organizations and further dissemination activities planned.

**5 Questions to Ask**

1. **What is oxytocin?**
   - Oxytocin to start or advance labour is given intravenously using a pump to control the administration of oxytocin.
   - Oxytocin should only be used when the benefits of delivery outweigh the risks of continuing the pregnancy.

2. **What are the side effects?**
   - Oxytocin helps the uterus contract. The contractions open the cervix and help your baby move down into the birth canal.
   - To help start labour (induction), or advance labour gave birth vaginally.

3. **What does this mean for me?**
   - Your contractions, blood pressure, and heart rate will be checked regularly.
   - Let your health care team know right away if you have:
     - Heavy bleeding from your vagina
     - Strong contractions that are too long or too short
     - Headache, nausea, vomiting
     - Heavy bleeding or post-partum bleeding
     - Fast/irregular heart rate or changes in blood pressure
     - Heart rate changes
   - Other options may include waiting for labour to start, having a C-section, or using other medicines, each of which has its own benefits and risks—discuss factors (e.g., heart condition, blood pressure).

4. **How will my baby be monitored?**
   - Your baby’s heart rate will be monitored, and other tests may be used to check how your baby is growing and developing inside your uterus.
   - Other tests may include ultrasound, Fetal Movement Counting, or non-stress tests.

5. **What do I watch for?**
   - Your contractions, blood pressure, and heart rate will be checked regularly.
   - Let your health care team know right away if you have:
     - Heavy bleeding from your vagina
     - Strong contractions that are too long or too short
     - Headache, nausea, vomiting
     - Heavy bleeding or post-partum bleeding
     - Fast/irregular heart rate or changes in blood pressure
     - Heart rate changes
   - Other options may include waiting for labour to start, having a C-section, or using other medicines, each of which has its own benefits and risks—discuss factors (e.g., heart condition, blood pressure).

**Harvests of the Oxytocin Incident database**

- Mismanagement of IV oxytocin is the highest risk based on HIROC claims.

**Christie’s Story**

“This patient handout could open the lines of communication between patients and health care providers and empower parents and carers to feel in control of their birth story.”

Christie, Patient Advocate

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1. Institute for Safe Medication Practices (ISMP), Canada
2. Healthcare Insurance Reciprocal of Canada (HIROC)
3. Patients for Patient Safety Canada
4. Provincial Council for Maternal and Child Health (PCMC)
5. Canadian Association of Midwives (CAM)
6. HealthCareExcellence Canada
7. Horizon Health Network/Canadian Society of Hospital Pharmacists
8. Canadian Association of Midwives (CAM)
9. Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (SOGC)