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Risk Management & Patient Safety Tips

Recommended Guidelines for Dispensing Samples

Everyone loves a freebie! - A little bonus for just being in the right place at the right time. However when the free item is sample medication, caution should be taken in order to reduce liability risks. Giving patients samples of prescribed medication can be of benefit in many ways:

- Cost savings to the patient
- Helps to access if a new medication will work for the patient
- Patients seem to feel a greater sense of value from the appointment
- Can help to build good will with the physician

However, when the management of samples is too informal, patients, physicians and their staff may be at risk.

Incidents have been reported when staff dispensed inappropriate medications to patients, themselves or to other staff members without physician awareness. Such activities, although often unknown to the physician, can delay proper treatment while exposing the physician to potential liability.

Another liability exposure can happen when medication is dispensed according to physician orders, but without documentation of the quantity administered, dose schedule or other instructions.

It is imperative to keep in mind that when patients observe physicians treating samples matter-of-factly, the serious nature of the medications and usage instructions are more likely to be undermined. In order to minimize risks related to sample medications, consider the following guidelines:

- Reasonably secure all medications, including samples.
- Inventory all samples monthly and discard any about to expire.

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Policyholders to Receive Dividend For Third Consecutive Year!

"We're pleased to announce that MAG Mutual Insurance Company's Board of Directors has again announced a **dividend distribution to our policyholders,**" said **Dr. Roy Vandiver, MAG Mutual's Chairman of the Board.** Another example of how MAG Mutual remains "stronger than ever" in this economic climate, MAG Mutual policyholders will begin receiving a \$7.5 million dividend on June 1, 2009.

The distribution will be made to all eligible MAG Mutual Physicians and Surgeons Professional Liability policyholders of record as of the close of business April 1, 2009. This year's distribution means that eligible policyholders will receive **\$32.5 million in dividends from June 2007 through May 2010. MAG Mutual has now declared and distributed dividends in 11 of the last 15 years.**

Each physician's dividend amount is based on the number of years insured with MAG Mutual and the premium amount paid. Beginning with policies renewing on June 1, 2009, the company will apply the total dividend amount as a credit on the Declaration Page of the renewal policy. For eligible policyholders who retire or do not renew their policy, the total dividend amount will be applied to any outstanding balance or provided by check.

Your Board of Directors and all of MAG Mutual's employees thank you for your loyalty and trust. If you have any questions, please call us at **1-800-282-4882.**

Rank MAG Mutual!

We know you have a lot of options when it comes to choosing an insurance company, which is why we strive to offer service that meet your needs and exceed your expectations.

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(Rate MAG Mutual, continued from page 1)

In the coming months, you will hear more about several new policyholder service initiatives we will implement with the goal to make your experiences with us even better than they are today.

To measure how we are doing, and how our changes help us improve, we need your assistance. When you call MAG Mutual with a business question or issue, you will be asked a single question at the conclusion of your call: **How likely are you to recommend MAG Mutual to another physician, associate or medical practice, using a scale of 0-10 (ten being the most likely)?** Your answer will help us measure customer satisfaction. If you'd like to give us a response online, please visit www.MAGMutual.com/rating/ and complete the question.


(Recommended Guidelines for Dispensing Samples, continued from page 1)

- Dispense samples by physician order only and document name of medication, quantities given and a description of any instructions and warnings given to the patient.
- When appropriate, give patient instructions as you would for any prescription medication in accordance with your state laws.
- Don't "dispense" samples to employees, or if you do, follow the same steps that you would for a regular patient.
- Record samples dispensed in the patient's chart along with the lot number and other information you can use to follow up, should there be a problem or recall.
- Ask sales reps for generic samples.
- Report significant thefts or losses of prescription drug samples.
- Contact your State Board of Pharmacy to ensure that your practices are in compliance with your state's laws. 

References:

1. <http://www.ismp.org/Consumer/Samples.html>
2. July 14, 1999 Institute for Safe Medication Practices, Medication Safety Alert. Sample medications: Safe management is a difficult but necessary process

The MAG Mutual telephone representative will only make a note of the response and will not track respondents – nor will your answer reflect on our customer service representative. In some situations, the representatives may need to mail you a note following the call to resolve an issue or answer a question. A web site link will be included with the note to give you the opportunity to further provide your opinion.

The more responses we receive the better. You may be asked the question whenever you call because answers may vary over time. We value your views and experiences and appreciate your participation in this survey. Thank you for putting your trust in us and look forward to serving you in the years ahead. 

Policyholders have received dividends 11 out of the last 15 years = \$64 million+



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