

RADIOPAQUE “DYES”/CONTRAST MEDIA ARE PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Intravascular radiocontrast media are routinely used in hospital radiology (X-ray) departments in conjunction with many radiology or X-ray procedures. It has come to the attention of the Board of Pharmacy that in many cases, they may not be handled appropriately. These products are prescription drugs, bearing the Federal Caution: **Caution: Federal law prohibits dispensing without prescription.** The Board believes that in many cases, physicians are writing orders for radiology procedures which are performed with no order ever being written for a specific radiocontrast media meaning that pharmacists never review the order for drug-drug interactions, appropriate dosage, contraindications, or possible allergies and the administration of these prescription legend drugs is never charted on the patient's Medication Administration Record (MAR).

In general, Hospital Policies and Procedures require that all drugs (1.) be ordered by an authorized practitioner in the “Physicians Order” section of the Medical Record; (2.) have a pharmacist review the order prior to dispensing or administration for drug-drug interactions, appropriateness, etc.; and (3.) be charted appropriately in the patient's Medication Administration Record. If this process is not followed, the ramifications for the patient could be severe. These drugs require a physician's order or prescription because they have inherent dangers. The package inserts for these products carry **CONTRAINDICATION, WARNINGS, PRECAUTIONS AND A LIST OF ADVERSE REACTIONS** just like all the other prescription legend drugs and for good reason. Cholografin Meglumine (Iodipamide Meglumine Injection by Bracco Diagnostics) is contraindicated “in patients with concomitant severe impairment of renal and liver function.” If no order for the drug is written, reviewed or charted, who is checking for an adverse event? Patients who are taking Glucophage (Metformin HCL by Bristol-Myers Squibb Company), a commonly prescribed oral antihyperglycemic agent warns: **Glucophage should be temporarily discontinued in patients undergoing radiologic studies involving intravascular administration of iodinated contrast materials, because such products may result in acute alteration of renal function.** Who is checking on this in your Hospital or Clinic? If the answer is “No One”, think about **the worst case scenario:** A patient receiving Glucophage undergoes a radiologic study involving administration of intravascular iodinated contrast materials, suffers alteration of renal function resulting in impairment of renal function thus blocking the Metformin (Glucophage) excretion causing fatal lactic acidosis. Not good for the patient and very poor risk management for the hospital or clinic.

The above information is not in depth nor is it intended to be. It is provided for the purpose of improving patient care and ensuring their safety. The Board suggests that as a practicing pharmacist or as a Director of Pharmacy in a Hospital or a clinic setting, you should review how these drugs are being handled in relation to the facility's Policies and Procedures and in regard to patient safety.