



# The GeriJournal

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## High Alert Medications

Last year, the Institute for Safe Medication Practices (ISMP) produced a list of medications “that bear a heightened risk of causing significant patient harm when they are used in error.” A number of these medications are injectables and are only used intravenously in hospitals. Many are oral products, or s.c./i.m. agents used in the community and long term care.

All insulin products are included on the list because a single dosing error can cause a hypoglycemic crisis. Oral hypoglycemics are included as well (e.g. glyburide), but pouch based administration reduces the risk of these products considerably.

Narcotics are also on the list, as overdosage can lead to respiratory depression. Potent narcotics, such as morphine and hydromorphone, fentanyl patches and injectables present the greatest degree of risk.

The other large drug category considered high risk is the anticoagulants. Warfarin, heparin and heparin like

products such as Fragmin® and Innohep® are included. Some chemotherapy drugs, including methotrexate and Procytox® are also on the list.

We have added the words “High Alert” to all labels and MAR entries for these drugs. We also have added a section to our Policy and Procedure Manual pertaining to them. Methods to prevent adverse reactions from these drugs and identify and respond to them are discussed in the manual. If you would like this insert and in-servicing on High Alert Meds, contact *GeriatRx* or your consultant pharmacist.

## Flomax and Floppy Iris

Eye surgeons have seen more cases of Intraoperative Floppy Iris Syndrome (IFIS) recently. This condition is marked by sudden constriction of the pupil and protrusion of the iris during surgery. It complicates surgery and can lead to permanent eye damage.

Retrospective analysis has linked Flomax® to this condition. Flomax® improves urine flow in men with enlarged prostate glands. It binds specifically to the alpha 1A receptor found in muscle tissue around the bladder outlet. The muscle relaxes and urine flow is improved. Most prostate drugs bind weakly to this receptor and therefore are less likely to cause IFIS.

Usually, stopping a medication before surgery allows it to be washed out of the body. Stopping Flomax® even a year before doesn't seem to help.

Men in whom future cataract surgery is contemplated should likely not take Flomax® and might be wise to avoid any of the alpha-blocking drugs used for BPH. Consultation with an ophthalmologist might be prudent before initiating treatment with any of these drugs, especially Flomax®.

## BD AutoShield

Since April 1<sup>st</sup> all LTC facilities have used retractable needles for insulin injection. The Novofine Autocover® Needle has been the principle product used since that time.

Becton Dickinson produces a competing product, called the BD AutoShield®. Availability of the AutoShield has been sporadic, but the company has overcome its supply problems. We are now pleased to offer the AutoShield needle as an alternative to the Autocover.

Some nurses have expressed greater confidence that the full dose is being delivered when using the BD product. It is also slightly less expensive. Let us know if you would like a sample of the product. For more information, go to [www.bd.com/autosield](http://www.bd.com/autosield).

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