

Tennessee Pharmacists Association

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Universal Medication List Available for Use in Tennessee

To improve medication safety in Tennessee, the Tennessee Pharmacists Association adopted a Universal Medication List (UML) in 2007 as the first step in a project to provide medication information across the continuum of care. The TPA created an *ad hoc* Committee for Continuum of Care with the goal “to improve medication safety in Tennessee by providing a universally consistent process for communicating vital patient information regarding medications and allergies across the continuum of care.” Support from all pharmacists in all practice settings is needed to improve medication safety.

Tennessee pharmacists should encourage their patients to carry an up-to-date medication and allergy list with them at all times to be available at entry and exit from all healthcare encounters. The Universal Medication List can be downloaded free of charge from the TPA web site (www.tnpharm.org).

A TPA-sponsored electronic survey of its members, as well as members of other health care professional organizations, resulted in input about the most important elements and formats for a universal medication form, whether paper or electronic. The Committee for Continuum of Care evaluated several medication list forms, using the data collected from the survey. Tennessee’s UML is adapted from a South Carolina Hospital Association form which scored the highest based on data from the survey. The UML will help promote a patient’s health and safety by:

- Helping patients remember all the medications they are taking, including over the counter, herbals, and supplements;
- Assisting pharmacists, physicians, and other healthcare providers with obtaining an accurate medication history;
- Providing pharmacists with another resource for obtaining information required to be included in the patient profile maintained in the pharmacy (especially helpful with new patients or patients who use multiple pharmacies);
- Helping identify and prevent actual or potential medication or medication-related problems, such as allergies, interactions; wrong dosages, duplications, and medication-disease contraindications; and
- Encouraging more formal communication between patients and providers.

TPA encourages your involvement, as well as the patient’s, by doing the following:

- Provide the UML to your patients, and encourage them to complete the form;
- Ask for the UML on every pharmacy visit, and remind or assist the patient with updating the list whenever a medication is changed;
- Encourage patients to carry the UML with them at all times, and present it every time they seek medical care (physician office, pharmacy, hospital, nursing home, etc.);
- Encourage patients to learn about the medications they are taking, why they are taking them, what time they should be taken, potential side effects, potential medication interactions, and what to do if they experience side effects;
- Remind patients that herbs, vitamins, and other dietary supplements can interact with medications and can cause side effects; let them know these should also be included on their UML;
- Contact your pharmacy software vendor to incorporate the UML in the pharmacy system, so that you can print an up-to-date list for your patients.

The Tennessee Medical Association, Tennessee Nurses Association, Tennessee Hospital Association, Tennessee Academy of Family Physicians, Tennessee Dental Association, Tennessee Poison Center, and BlueCross/BlueShield have already endorsed the Universal Medication List. Adoption and use of the UML in Tennessee is the first step in moving toward the objective of electronic medication information exchange across the continuum of care. Please download the UML (www.tnpharm.org), so that you can join in this patient safety initiative today: www.tnpharm.org/BlankUML.pdf (English) or www.tnpharm.org/BlankUMLspanish.pdf (Spanish).