



POLY-PHARMACY MEDICATIONS

TASK: To teach your Soldiers the definition of poly-pharmacy and explain the role of Commanders and Leaders at identifying and reporting “at risk” behaviors of Soldiers on poly-pharmacy medications.

CONDITIONS: Discussion – Question based.

STANDARDS: Understand the definition of poly-pharmacy; know the impact poly-pharmacy medications may have on your Soldiers.

REFERENCE(S): OSTG/MEDCOM Policy Memo 13-032.



POLY-PHARMACY MEDICATIONS

Poly-pharmacy is a term used to describe a Soldier treated for multiple conditions with a variety of medications prescribed by several healthcare providers. Criteria for poly-pharmacy is:

- Soldier who received four (4) or more distinct meds within 1-month with at least one of the meds an opioid narcotic or,
- Soldier who received four (4) or more unique multiple psych and/or central nervous system depressant meds within 1-month, or,
- Soldier who made three (3) or more ER visits within one year, where each ER visit can be tied to issue of an opioid med within seven days of the visit.



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It is absolutely vital that Soldiers actively participate in their medical care. A Soldier's role is:

- Provide information on any over-the-counter med, herbal med, supplement, recreational drug, or prescription med filled at retail or mail-order pharmacy.
- Do not take more medication than prescribed, it could lead to an overdose.
- Do not take less medication than prescribed, it could lead to ineffective treatment and delay healing and recovery.
- Do not share meds with others or take someone else's meds because they affect everyone differently.
- Remember to take the meds for the timeframe prescribed; destroy or dispose of all Meds you are no longer taking.



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Leaders work directly with Soldiers and should be alert to “at risk” behaviors that might be displayed by Soldiers on poly-pharmacy meds:

- Sleeping on duty.
- Late or missing formation, duties or appointments.
- Inability to focus or make decisions.
- Demonstrating poor judgment with subsequent actions.
- Withdrawal or aggressive behavior, or acts of emotional behavior.
- “At risk circumstances” as a result of pending UCMJ action, pending divorce, financial issues, or loss of significant others.



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When Soldiers provide an accurate list of their medications, health care providers are able to get a true picture of potential risk for poly-pharmacy and develop strategies to mitigate harm.

When Commanders and Leaders identify and communicate “at risk” behaviors or circumstances in their Soldiers, they convey concern about their Soldier’s medical well-being.

Communicating information about a Soldier’s risk and monitoring for poly-pharmacy strengthens our efforts to minimize accidental or intentional harm to our Soldiers.