



For immediate Release

Patient Safety Medication Card Launched

New tool supports greater involvement by Manitobans in their own healthcare – greater awareness leads to enhanced patient safety

June 2, 2008 (Winnipeg MB) – Manitobans have a powerful new tool that can help them manage their own health care by knowing which medications they take and helping them share that information with their health care providers. The Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety today launched the free *It's Safe to Ask Medication Card* as the latest way to support Manitobans and their health care providers in the provision of safe patient care throughout the province.

Studies have shown that approximately 50% of Canadian patients have at least one medication error upon admission to hospital and about 40% of these errors have the potential to cause moderate to severe harm.

Few Manitobans keep an accurate list of their prescribed and over-the-counter medications, making it more difficult for healthcare providers to get a complete picture of the medications that their patients are taking.

"Patients can play an important and valued role in their own safety by knowing as much as possible about their medications and sharing that information with pharmacists, doctors and nurses," said Laurie Thompson, Executive Director of the Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety. "The Institute is urging all Manitobans who take medicines to fill out the card and carry it in their wallets, purses or pockets to all healthcare appointments and when they go to the hospital."

Filling in the card provides vital details about the individual's medications. Among other information, the card has places for Manitobans to write down the names, strengths, quantities, and frequencies that they take their medications, along with the reason they take it and who prescribed it.

Having a personal, up-to-date Medication Card, listing over-the-counter and prescription medications will:

- reduce the possibility of medication errors and contribute to improved patient safety,
- record information to increase patients' understanding of their medications and their health condition,
- enable providers to know patients' current medications and ensure that these medications are started or stopped correctly,
- provide critical information for emergency responders in times of emergency,
- improve communication between healthcare providers and patients about medications, and,
- allow for increased patient involvement in their health care.

"We have been anxiously awaiting the release of the It's Safe To Ask Medication Card as it will be a valuable tool when collecting an accurate home medication list," said Kristi Chorney, Brandon Regional Health Authority Quality/Risk Coordinator. "We believe it will further help build upon the successes we have had in medication reconciliation efforts over the past 18 months. Since implementing Safer Healthcare Now processes, our rate of potential harm to patients (known as unintentional changes to a patient's medications) has been cut in half."

Two hundred thousand medication cards will be printed initially and distributed across the province. They will be available to:

- community pharmacies,
- 48 healthcare teams in Manitoba involved in medication reconciliation, a best practice model of preventing medication errors (Safer Healthcare Now!),
- physicians' offices,
- community health agencies, and,
- senior resource councils.

Page 2 next...

PREMIER MEMBERS

Manitobans can also print a medication card or save it to their computer by visiting www.safetoask.ca.

The www.safetoask.ca site will feature:

- a Safe Use of Medications sheet for the public,
- two short informational videos, one to help Manitobans better understand why it is important to list and carry their medications and the other to help guide them in filling out the card,
- implementation tips for providers and organizations, along with a video on medication reconciliation for healthcare providers,
- supporting article, and,
- links to supporting materials in other jurisdictions.

The Government of Manitoba is the lead sponsor of the initiative, providing \$50,000 in funding towards printing, distribution and promotion of the *It's Safe To Ask Medication Card*. The Canadian Patient Safety Institute and Industrial Alliance Insurance and Financial Services Inc are also sponsors.

"We're very excited and proud to sponsor the It's Safe to Ask Medication Card," said the Honourable Kerri Irvin-Ross, Minister of Healthy Living. "We all need to feel confident taking an active role in our own treatment. Better understanding of our own situation can help ensure a speedy recovery, and reduce fears or apprehension at the same time."

The Manitoba College of Family Physicians, College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Manitoba, College of Registered Nurses of Manitoba, College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses of Manitoba and the Manitoba Pharmaceutical Association will send sample medication cards to their members, and encourage them to promote the use of the medication card. The Manitoba Society of Pharmacists has printed 10,000 copies and will distribute them upon request to pharmacies across Manitoba.

The Medication Card is also designed to fit into the Emergency Response Information Kit (ERIK) that is widely used in homes across Manitoba to alert emergency responders to important information in times of emergency. The kit, developed by a team headed by the Boni-Vital Council for Seniors, is commonly found on the front of Manitobans' refrigerators. The Paramedic Association of Manitoba supports this new initiative, as it will continue to provide essential information to paramedics during times of emergency.

"We know from the experiences of Manitobans using our ERIK kits that having important medical information available to emergency responders and healthcare professionals has saved lives," said Karen Irvine, Resource Coordinator for the Boni-Vital Council for Seniors. "That's why we have been so pleased to have the opportunity to partner with the Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety to ensure that the new *It's Safe To Ask Medication Card* works with our ERIK kits! "

"Very often patients and family members feel anxious or overwhelmed in times of emergencies so it may be difficult for them to recall important medical details," said Eric Glass, Chair of the Paramedic Association of Manitoba. "The new *It's Safe To Ask Medication Card* not only serves as an excellent tool for patients to record and carry information about their prescribed and over-the-counter medications to medical appointments, it can also help speak for them in times of emergencies in their home when they tuck the Med Card into the ERIK kit on the fridge."

"Health care providers won't be able to make the best decisions about a patient's healthcare, without knowing important information about what medicines they are taking" said the Executive Director of the Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety. "We are asking every Manitoban who takes medications to list them and keep the list up-to-date. Know your medications and show your card every time you see a doctor, nurse, pharmacist or are in a situation where your health is being discussed. Know and Show - It could help save your life!"

All partners in this initiative agree that we want to encourage dialogue about these important areas of patient safety. We want people to know that **"It's Safe to Ask" about their medications.**

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