

National Drug File Support Group Guidelines for Interaction Entry

03/01/01

The National Drug File (NDF) Support Group updates and maintains the drug-drug interaction file in VISTA. The Group is also responsible for maintaining the VA Drug Classification system, which has been adopted by the USP and other organizations. VA Drug Class codes are assigned in a manner consistent with the need to provide a logical organization and to provide efficient duplicate drug class checks in VA prescription processing software applications.

As a general rule, only true pharmacokinetic drug interactions are entered in the National Drug File, including alterations in GI absorption, plasma protein binding, enzyme-induction, enzyme-inhibition, and renal excretion interactions. *Allergic cross-reactions and pure pharmacodynamic drug interactions (such as drugs with additive or antagonistic pharmacologic actions) are not routinely entered in the National Drug File.*

Drug interactions are classified as critical or significant. To be classified as critical, the interaction must be identified in the manufacturer black box warning, or be well documented in the literature to cause significant sequelae (e.g. death). Drug interactions that do not meet these criteria, but which are still considered to be of substantial clinical importance, are classified as significant interactions. Literally thousands of drug interactions that can be found in the literature and in reference books have been omitted from the National Drug File because the NDF Support Group does not consider them to be sufficiently important to include. It is felt that inclusion of trivial or minor drug interactions adds the risk that users will become so inundated with unimportant warnings that they will begin to overlook the truly important ones. Interactions may be maintained locally (by individual stations), even if the NDF Support Group does not elect to add them to the National Drug File. However, the NDF Support Group is automatically notified of all local changes, so that they can be reviewed for possible inclusion at the national level.

The team of experts meets monthly via teleconference, and annually in person, to review potential new drug interactions and update the National Drug File. The team reviews all drug interactions, which have been newly entered into the drug file by local stations, as well as drug interaction updates from Hansten's Drug Interactions, Drug Interaction Facts, and Evaluations of Drug Interactions. In addition, if a new drug interaction is identified with one member of a large class of similar drugs (e.g. ACE-Inhibitors), the interaction is evaluated for all of the drugs in that class. Information about potential new drug interactions is gathered from EDI, Hanstens, DI Facts, Micromedex, Medline, official FDA labeling changes to drug package inserts, and other sources, by members prior to each meeting. The group determines from this evidence whether the interaction should be added to the national drug file and how it should be classified.