

NATIONAL PBM BULLETIN

MAY 13, 2011

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION PHARMACY BENEFITS MANAGEMENT SERVICES (PBM),
MEDICAL ADVISORY PANEL (MAP), & CENTER FOR MEDICATION SAFETY (VA MEDSAFE)

MARCAINE® (BUPIVACAINE HCL): POTENTIAL LOOK-ALIKE CONFUSION

I. ISSUE¹

One local facility noted potential look-alike confusion with bupivacaine HCl (Marcaine®) 0.25% (10 mL vial) and bupivacaine HCl (Marcaine®) 0.5% (10mL vial) due to incorrect similar-colored labeling.

II. BACKGROUND¹

Pain clinic staff at one site noticed a different color than usual for the labeling of a 0.5% bupivacaine HCl (Marcaine®) 10 mL-vial. Typically, bupivacaine HCl (Marcaine®) 0.25% vials have BLUE labeling and bupivacaine HCl (Marcaine®) 0.5% vials have GREEN labeling (Figure A). However, in this case, it was noted that certain bupivacaine HCl (Marcaine®) 0.5% vials also had BLUE labeling (Figure B).

Figure A. Usual labeling distinguishes the separate strengths using different colors to avoid confusion between products.



Figure B. Labeling in question (discovered at a local facility) uses similar colors for the different strengths, making confusion a possibility.



Local pharmacy reviewed all stock throughout their facility and found four affected vials:

- NDC # 0409-1560-10 for all 4 vials of Marcaine® (bupivacaine HCl) 0.5% (10mL vial)
 - 3 vials with the Lot # 79420DD, Exp. 7/1/11
 - 1 vial with the Lot # 81360DD, Exp. 9/1/11

Hospira was contacted, and according to the manufacturer, no changes have been made in the labelings of either bupivacaine HCl (Marcaine®) 0.25% (10 mL vial) or bupivacaine HCl (Marcaine®) 0.5% (10mL vial). It is not believed that any patients received the affected vials.

III. PROVIDER RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Providers should be aware of the potential for look-alike confusion between bupivacaine HCl (Marcaine®) 0.25% (10 mL vial) and bupivacaine HCl (Marcaine®) 0.5% (10mL vial) due to different color labeling than usual in the above reported lots.
2. Providers should carefully check the dosage on the vial when either bupivacaine HCl (Marcaine®) 0.25% (10 mL vial) or bupivacaine HCl (Marcaine®) 0.5% (10mL vial) is ordered and/or administered.
3. Pharmacy should review their stock for affected product(s) previously mentioned as well as other affected lots that may not yet have been noticed, and ensure that a method is in place to distinguish between bupivacaine HCl (Marcaine®) 0.25% (10 mL vial) and bupivacaine HCl (Marcaine®) 0.5% (10mL vial) in order to avoid future look-alike confusion while the atypical blue labeling of bupivacaine HCl (Marcaine®) 0.5% (10mL vial) is circulating.

IV. REFERENCES

1. VISN 8 Field Information Report.

ACTIONS

- **Facility Director** (or physician designee): Forward this document to the Facility Chief of Staff (COS).
- **Facility COS and Chief Nurse Executives**: Forward this document to all appropriate providers who handle these medications (e.g., **primary care providers, anesthesiologists, pain clinic staff, pharmacy staff**, including contract providers, etc.). In addition, forward to the Associate Chief of Staff (ACOS) for Research and Development (R&D). Forward to other VA employees as deemed appropriate.
- **ACOS for R&D**: Forward this document to Principal Investigators (PIs) who have authority to practice at the facility and to your respective Institutional Review Board (IRB).