



# ECRI Institute's PSO Monthly Brief

March 2015

## Weigh Your Options: Weight-Based Dosing Errors Harm Patients

Weight-based dosing errors, which can occur among patients of all ages, are preventable if organizations adopt a multipronged approach to promote prompt and accurate weighing, documentation, and access to the patient's information (i.e., weight) for medical staff.

Mistakes can occur if the medication dose is calculated using an inaccurate patient weight. Therefore, healthcare organizations should have policies in place stipulating that a medication order can only be filled if current information about the patient's weight is available and documented in the medical record. Nevertheless, [several event reports submitted to ECRI Institute PSO](#) (*login required*) indicate that medication orders are sometimes filled even though information about the patient's weight is not provided.

ECRI Institute PSO has seen the following types of errors:

- Recording the patient's weight, taken in pounds, as kilograms
- Estimating the patient's weight, rather than weighing the patient
- Misidentifying the proper dose for patients who are obese
- Calculating the dose incorrectly for the patient's weight

Many strategies may be used to prevent weight-based dosing errors. However, before any corrective actions can be taken, the organization should assess its patient-weighing processes to determine their efficacy and how they can be improved. This assessment should cover the availability and condition of scales, patient weight documentation practices, use of standardized order sets for medications that require weight-based dosing, pharmacy review of weight-based dosing medication regimens, use of clinical decision support for safe medication dosing, and more.

ECRI Institute PSO members can log in for additional guidance on [weight-based medication dosing](#) and [addressing the special needs of bariatric patients](#), as well as such tools as a medication card [prototype](#) and [sample](#).

[Contact us](#), and let us demonstrate how we can help you review and improve your medication dosing practices.

### Patient Safety Center

***World-class research, guidance, and tools made available to the public.***

ECRI Institute is committed to patient safety as the key element of our mission. The [Patient Safety Center](#) contains publicly available free resources to help all healthcare providers improve the quality and safety of the care they provide.

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