November 11, 2015

Anne Coghlan, RN, MScN
President
Canadian Council of Registered Nurse Regulators
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Canada

Dear Canadian Council of Registered Nurse Regulators:

National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) performed an inquiry regarding the similarities of approved, available generic medications in both the U.S. and in Canada. An additional topic of interest is a current, valid source housing a list of approved medications in Canada. This source should have the ability to provide current updates regarding newly approved medications and those recently discontinued for use in Canada. While medication prescribing and usage patterns are a separate issue, NCSBN’s interest lies in approved generic medication equivalency in the U.S. and Canada. Whereas, there is variation in brand and trade medication names, the use of generic medication and their considerable similarities in the two locations is the primary focus.

NCSBN staff contacted National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities (NAPRA) in Ottawa, ON. Staff spoke with Theresa Schopf, BSc (Pharm), MBA, R.Ph, Manager of Gateway Operations. Overall, Ms. Schopf stated the following regarding the topic of generic medication availability in Canada versus the U.S.:

Canada utilizes the Health Canada Drug Product database for a listing of approved drugs in Canada. All drugs approved for use in Canada are listed in this database. The database is updated continuously and is considered to reflect the current situation with respect to new drugs and drugs no longer approved for use in Canada. There are some differences in medication availability in Canada versus what is available in the U.S.; however, there doesn’t seem to be a huge percentage difference in available drugs. In general, medications available in the U.S. are available in Canada. The database can serve as a resource to gather up-to-date information on this topic.
In order for the NCLEX to remain the fair, valid, assessment of the minimum knowledge, skills, and abilities required to practice safe, effective nursing at the entry-level, it is paramount each candidate has an equal opportunity to demonstrate their ability. To support this endeavor, the NCLEX only utilizes approved generic medications with availability in both the U.S. and Canada.

It is important the medications used during NCLEX administration reflect a representation of medications potentially prescribed during the care of the client population seen by the newly licensed entry-level nurse. Based on the practice activities of the entry-level nurse, the medications reflected on the NCLEX are a portion of approved medications in both areas and not the entire approved medication databases used in the U.S. and in Canada.

Since early 2013, NCSBN has utilized the Health Canada Drug Product database during NCLEX item development and all subsequent NCLEX examinations administered in Canada and the U.S. NCSBN will continue to utilize the Health Canada Drug Product database to ascertain approved generic medication availability in Canada ensuring an equivalent generic medication representation in the U.S.

In summary, based on the information received from NAPRA and consistent with NCLEX policies, procedures, and examination construct, all medications utilized on the NCLEX are approved generic medications located in the Health Canada Drug Product database with approved generic equivalency in the U.S. Any medication that fails to meet this criterion is prohibited for inclusion within NCLEX items.

Sincerely,

Philip Dickison, PhD, RN
Chief Officer, Examinations
National Council of State Boards of Nursing