HOW TO AVOID MEDICATION ERRORS IN CHEMOTHERAPY

Ensure complete documentation. Consider installing a "patient passport" with all information.¹

Make sure staff are adequately trained.²

Aim for good communication between doctors and pharmacists: both should attend cancer conferences, and both should be prepared to listen to the other expert’s opinion.³

Use accurate and unambiguous chemotherapy orders. Avoid verbal orders.⁴

Employ high technology: computerized physician order entry,² cytostatics software, error proofing systems.

Employ low technology: High-quality fax machine, write clearly, use generic names and TALLman lettering (apply uppercase lettering to sections of look-alike, sound-alike, drugs to highlight points of dissimilarity).²

Set up a "Critical Incident Reporting System" (CIRS) to report mistakes and near misses; set up a patient safety committee.⁴,⁵

Use algorithms to plan the treatment course of every patient, as it is almost impossible to keep up with every new development, approval and guidelines regarding chemotherapy drugs.⁶

Sources:
6 Interview with Mathias Nietzke, Head of Department for Chemotherapie Drugs at St.-Johannes-Hospital Dortmund, 2018.