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MEDICATIONS MANAGEMENT FOR MINORS WHILE IN THE FIELD

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There are a number of ways that an organization can manage a minor participant's medications in the field. This seems to be an evolving process that morphs and adjusts with the dynamic nature of this industry. Some organizations have taken the more hands off approach, saying that medications are entirely the responsibility of the members and that field leaders should not have a role in the management of prescribed or over-the-counter medications. Others feel that a more involved, hands on approach is the best way to manage the medications of minor participants.

In the past, the Student Conservation Association (SCA) has taken a more hands on approach to managing medications with minors. SCA crew leaders were more directly involved with the process of minor members taking their medications. Recently, SCA has made significant changes in the way we manage minors' medications in the field. The greatest changes are that we no longer use the terms *administer* or *dispense*, we will not accept members that cannot administer their own medications, and we do not pour or count crew member's medications for them. Members are responsible for their medication management and pouring and counting their own medications according to the doctor's instructions on the medication container. This puts the responsibility on the crew members, not on our leaders, for their own medication management.

After extensive research and counseling from both our legal counsel and medical advisors, it appears that administering and dispensing medications, despite what we have called it the last few years, is far from what we actually do in the field. The term *administer* refers to a licensed medical professional directly providing a single dose of medication for immediate use by a patient. *Dispensing* medications refers to a licensed medical professional providing a patient with a drug in a quantity sufficient to be used for multiple doses. Since our field leaders usually are not doctors or nurses, it is clear that these terms really did not accurately describe how SCA was managing medications in the field.

The phrase that more accurately describes what SCA does is "assisting with medication therapy." This change in

nomenclature allows members' parents and our crew leaders to clearly understand how medications are handled on SCA programs. This phrase means that crew leaders will only watch minors take their own medications and document that member appeared to take their medication as per their doctor's instructions. If, for some reason, a prescribed medication wasn't taken, this also must be documented with an explanation as to why. The medications are taken out of where they are stored by the crew leader and then presented to the member to take. The process of assisting with medication therapy puts the onus on the crew members for their own medication management. In addition, it allows crew leaders to document how members are managing their medications as well as the health and wellness of their crew. This approach simply documents our leaders' observations, keeping SCA crew leaders away from handling prescription and over the counter medications that are clearly out of their scope of practice to handle or that they are uncomfortable handling.

Rules for Documentation

All SCA crew leaders are given a health and wellness log to document all medications and medical conditions that are present on a crew. Each member has his or her own page with 35 of the boxes shown below. The log looks like a calendar, however, it has a specific space for each medication to be documented for each day. At the top of each of page (shown below) it has the member's name, the medications they take, the dosage, the condition the medication treats, the side effects of the medications, and the times they are supposed to be taken. Each day the leaders are responsible for documenting all medical, behavioral, and emotional events. Each day the crew leaders are responsible for initialing each box (shown below as MTV). In addition, they are also responsible for tracking food and water intake, the time that medications were taken, and the general health of each crew member. These logs have helped us look into the field and see what was happening on a daily basis with medications management. Below is an example of how we use these logs.

Member name: Jane Doe Crew name: Arches National Park

Routine Medications	Medication Name	Dosage	Times to be Taken	For What Condition	Side Effects/ Contraindications	For Dates
Medication 1 (M1)	Wellbutrin	150 mg	7 am; 6pm; _____	Depression	headache, appetite loss	_____ to _____
Medication 2 (M2)	Albuterol	2 puffs	Before hiking	Asthma	mild shakiness	_____ to _____
Medication 3 (M3)	Ortho-Cyclen	1 pill	7 am; _____; _____	_____	more sensitive to sun	_____ to _____

Member is allergic to: horses (sneezing); peanuts (anaphylactic—epi-pen); penicillin

<p>Date: 7/4/07 MTV All's well today. Good attitude, food, H2O OK. A bit of an upset stomach at end of day.</p> <p>M1 <u>7 a.m.</u> <u>6 p.m.</u> M2 <u>8 a.m.</u> _____ M3 <u>7 a.m.</u> _____</p>	<p>Date: 7/5/07 MTV <i>Didn't take 2 meds this AM b/c of vomiting. Better by PM, evening meds taken.</i></p> <p>M1 <u>O</u> <u>6 p.m.</u> M2 <u>8 a.m.</u> _____ M3 <u>O</u> _____</p>	<p>Date: 7/6/07 MTV Better today. A bit tired. Small appetite.</p> <p>M1 <u>7 a.m.</u> <u>6 p.m.</u> M2 <u>8 a.m.</u> _____ M3 <u>7 a.m.</u> _____</p>	<p>Date: 7/7/07 MTV Back to normal food, H2O intake, energy</p> <p>M1 <u>7 a.m.</u> <u>6 p.m.</u> M2 <u>8 a.m.</u> _____ M3 <u>7 a.m.</u> _____</p>	<p>Date: 7/8/07 LV Great attitude</p> <p>M1 <u>7 a.m.</u> <u>6 p.m.</u> M2 <u>8 a.m.</u> _____ M3 <u>7 a.m.</u> _____</p>
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We have also outlined specific guidelines on how to document situations where a crew member misses a dose or refuses to take a dose all together. If a member refuses to take his or her medication we view this as a behavior incident and train the crew leaders to call the SCA Emergency Response System immediately. The guidelines for this process are shown below.

If the medication is taken:
Write the time in the correct blank and initial the day.

If a medication was not taken:
Write "O" in the correct blank and explain why it was omitted.

If medication is refused: Write "R" in the correct spot and call SCA immediately.

<p>Date: 7/4/07 MTV All's well today. Good attitude, food, H2O OK. A bit of an upset stomach at end of day.</p> <p>M1 <u>7 a.m.</u> <u>6 p.m.</u> M2 <u>8 a.m.</u> _____ M3 <u>7 a.m.</u> _____</p>
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<p>Date: 7/5/07 MTV <i>Didn't take meds this AM b/c of vomiting. Better by PM, evening meds taken.</i></p> <p>M1 <u>O</u> <u>6 p.m.</u> M2 <u>8 a.m.</u> _____ M3 <u>O</u> _____</p>

<p>Date: 7/6/07 MTV <i>Refused meds today. Called SCA, filed incident report.</i></p> <p>M1 <u>R</u> <u>R</u> M2 <u>R</u> <u>R</u> M3 <u>R</u> <u>R</u></p>
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SCA crew leaders store the minor's prescription medications and other over-the-counter medications for safe keeping during the program. This does not include epinephrine, inhalers, or diabetes medications. We ask members to keep these medications on them at all times. We do, however, ask all members to bring at least two of the delivery devices mentioned above so that the crew leaders can also keep a spare in the first aid kit. The reason for this is so that the medications are in a safe, secure location at all times.

We also want to provide the members a time for taking their medications. SCA trains its crew leaders to arrange a time every day where the crew member comes to the crew leader with a drink to take their medications so that this becomes a regular event for the crew members.

Before our members set foot into the field they also undergo an extensive medical review process. During this process any member that has a specific medical condition receives a medical questionnaire with questions regarding this condition. This information is included in the member's file and is used by the crew leaders to help them better understand the particular condition. Once we receive this information back from the member, our medical screeners fill out a medical review form. This form is used to give our crew leaders a clear summary of the medical condition that the member has. Every member with a medical condition that is reviewed will have this clearly summarized medical review form in their file.

In addition to the medical review form, if a member is taking medications, they or their parent(s) will complete a medications information sheet that goes into the field with other member medical information. The medications information sheet tells crew leaders about a certain medication and how it reacts with that particular person. It includes the name of the medication; the condition it treats; the side effects; its harmful interactions; how and when it should be taken; the doctor's name and number; and what to do if the member misses a dose. If a member takes three medications, then the crew member will have three specific medications information sheets in their file.

These tools have been instrumental for us in better managing the risks associated with minors and their prescriptions during our programs. All of our members go through the same process and they receive the same questionnaires across the board. This streamlined and consistent approach has helped us improve our medical reviewing and has also allowed us to better manage more medical conditions in the field.

Conclusions

While some organizations are shifting in the direction of having their members manage medications entirely by themselves, SCA feels that the best solution for our programs is to assist with medication therapy. This approach puts the responsibility on the members to manage their medications; however, it also allows us to document medication usage and oversee the health of each of our members and their own medication management. We feel that if crew leaders continue to store over-the-counter and minors' prescription medications as well as document that a member appears to be taking their medication, this is the best situation for us as an organization as well as for our crew members.

Mark Vermeal is national director of risk management and safety for the Student Conservation Association. He is responsible for developing and implementing strategies that enhance a culture and climate for risk management for nearly 3,800 staff and volunteers nationwide. Mark has over 15 years experience at the director level with outdoor programs at the White Mountain School and the Tin Mountain Conservation Center. An EMT, he has been a wilderness medicine instructor with SOLO since 1999 and a classroom teacher in anatomy and physiology for twelve years. Mark has professional training through the American Mountain Guides Association, with over eleven years of rock, ice, and alpine guiding experience and has been previously certified by the American Canoe Association as a white water open canoe instructor. In addition, Mark currently serves on the board of directors for the Pemi Valley Search and Rescue Team.

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