**Suggested model letter to pharmacy**

Dear Chief Pharmacist,

**Prevention of Human Factor Errors with Suxamethonium**  
An incident recently happened in another hospital where suxamethonium chloride 100 mg was inadvertently given to the patient during caesarean section under epidural anaesthesia. You probably know of similar incidents, which have been occurring ever since suxamethonium chloride was introduced in 1952. The National Audit Project 5 (NAP5) on ‘Accidental awareness during General Anaesthesia in the UK and Ireland reported six patients harmed by human factor errors with suxamethonium chloride. Three cases involved labelling errors during manual syringe preparation and three cases involved ‘syringe swaps’ from confusion with syringes of fentanyl and an antiemetic. <https://www.nationalauditprojects.org.uk/downloads/NAP5%20full%20report.pdf> (Page 114 - 115)

**Suggested action to reduce these Human Factor Errors and their harm.**

We have become aware that there are now alternative options to the suxamethonium chloride ampoules that we currently purchase. Pre-filled syringes of suxamethonium chloride, which are available either as a manufactured syringe or a compounded syringe (which has a lesser shelf life than manufactured versions), mitigate the risks of human factors errors, such as drawing up and labelling mistakes, providing that they are correctly labelled using the ISO26825 red colour. If possible, a 10ml size would be preferable to prevent confusion with 2ml syringes of other common drugs used in anaesthesia such as fentanyl, anti-emetics and midazolam.

Please could you purchase a supply these prefilled syringes of suxamethonium chloride as soon as possible and make them available at every location in the hospital where suxamethonium chloride is likely to be used. Shelf life of all pre-filled products, particularly manufactured versions, are much longer than for those drawn up by anaesthetists on the day. This allows the syringes to be kept on standby rather than repeatedly drawing up fresh syringes delivering some economic and sustainability advantages as well.

Please contact me if you require more information about suxamethonium PFS and if you have any further questions

Your sincerely

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Clinical Director

cc Patient Safety officer / department