

## Organization Aims to Prevent Medication Mistakes at Hospitals

The leading group that accredits hospitals is increasing efforts to prevent mistakes that occur when hospitals do not know what medications a patient is taking when admitted to the hospital. By January 2006, the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) will require hospitals to develop a process for obtaining and verifying a list of a patient's medications when the patient is admitted to the hospital. The list will be compared to what the hospital prescribes, and passed on to other providers when the patient is transferred or discharged.

This will help protect the safety of the thousands of patients admitted to hospitals every year, where medication mistakes can lead to serious injury or even death. Patients can help by making sure that they bring an up-to-date written record of all medications when being admitted to a hospital. This record should include all medicines and dosages (prescription or over-the-counter), dietary supplements, vitamins and herbal supplements. The record will help hospitals and all doctors involved in a patient's care keep track of medications and boost efforts to improve patient safety.