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Medication prescribing errors in the medical intensive care unit of Tikur Anbessa Specialized Hospital, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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Medication errors (MEs) are important problems in all hospitalized populations, especially in Intensive Care Unit (ICU). Little is known about the prevalence of medication prescribing errors in the ICU of hospitals in Ethiopia. The aim of this study was to assess medication prescribing errors in the ICU of Tikur Anbessa Specialized Hospital using retrospective cross-sectional analysis of patient cards and medication charts. About 220 patient charts were reviewed with a total of 1311 patient-days and 882 prescription episodes. 359 MEs were detected; with prevalence of 40 per 100 orders. Common prescribing errors were omission errors 154 (42.89%), 101 (28.13%) wrong combination, 48 (13.37%) wrong abbreviation, 30 (8.36%) wrong dose, wrong frequency 18 (5.01%) and wrong indications 8 (2.23%). The present study shows that medication errors are common in medical ICU of Tikur Anbessa Specialized Hospital. These results suggest future targets of prevention strategies to reduce the rate of medication error.