

SA Health

# Policy

## Standardised Terminology or Abbreviations and Symbols Used in Medication Documentation: “Spell it Out”

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Version 4.0

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## 1. Name of Policy

Standardised Terminology for Abbreviations and Symbols Used in Medication Documentation: “Spell it Out”

## 2. Policy statement

This policy sets out the mandatory requirements that apply across SA Health in relation to standardised terminology for abbreviations and symbols used in medication documentation.

## 3. Applicability

This policy applies to all employees and contracted staff of SA Health; that is all employees and contracted staff of the Department for Health and Wellbeing, Local Health Networks (including state-wide services aligned with those Networks) and SA Ambulance Service.

## 4. Policy principles

- > We are committed to patient safety and the quality use of medicines (QUM).
- > We use safe, clear and unambiguous communication and consistent terminology when prescribing, dispensing and administering medications.

## 5. Policy requirements

All SA Health employees and contractors must:

- > Comply with SA Health’s [\*Standardised terminology for abbreviations and symbols to be used in medication documentation: “Spell it Out”\*](#) and the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care [\*Recommendations for terminology, abbreviations and symbols used in medicines documentation\*](#).
- > Report incidents involving error-prone abbreviations, terminology and symbols via the Safety Learning System (SLS).
- > Where an electronic environment requires a variation from the recommendations of the mandatory documents:
  - o adhere to the principles from SA Health’s [\*Standardised terminology for abbreviations and symbols to be used in medication documentation: “Spell it Out”\*](#) and the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care [\*Recommendations for terminology, abbreviations and symbols used in medicines documentation\*](#);
  - o complete a risk assessment; and
  - o implement risk management strategies.

## 6. Mandatory related documents

The following documents must be complied with under this Policy, to the extent that they are relevant:

- > [\*Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care - Recommendations for terminology, abbreviations and symbols used in medicines documentation\*](#)
- > [\*Patient Incident Management and Open Disclosure Policy Directive\*](#)

- > [Standardised terminology for abbreviations and symbols to be used in medication documentation: “Spell it Out” \(2011\).](#)

## 7. Supporting information

- > [National Guidelines for On-Screen Display of Medicines Information](#)

## 8. Definitions

- > **Quality Use of Medicines (QUM):** means using medicines safely and effectively to get the best results, including selecting management options wisely, choosing suitable medicines and ensuring patients and carers have the knowledge and skills required.
- > **Safety Learning System (SLS):** means the application that enables SA Health services to record, manage, investigate and analyse patient and worker incidents, consumer feedback, capture information about security services and to record formal notifications including coronial matters or medical malpractice.
- > **SA Health:** means the Department for Health and Wellbeing, Local Health Networks (including state-wide services aligned with those Networks) and SA Ambulance Service.
- > **Statewide services:** means Statewide Clinical Support Services, Prison Health, SA Dental Service, BreastScreen SA and any other state-wide services that fall under the governance of the Local Health Networks

## 9. Compliance

This policy is binding on those to whom it applies or relates. Implementation at a local level may be subject to audit/assessment. The Domain Custodian must work towards the establishment of systems which demonstrate compliance with this policy, in accordance with the requirements of the [Integrated Compliance Policy](#).

Any instance of non-compliance with this policy must be reported to the Domain Custodian for the Clinical Governance, Safety and Quality Domain and the Domain Custodian for the Risk, Compliance and Audit Policy Domain.

## 10. Document ownership

Policy owner: Domain Custodian for the Clinical Governance, Safety and Quality Policy Domain

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## 11. Document history

Version	Date approved	Approved by	Amendment notes
v 4.0	7/08/2023	DCE Clinical System Support and Improvement	Updated to new Policy Framework template and requirements.
v 3.0	06/08/2018		Formally reviewed in line with 5 year scheduled timeline for review. Policy detail unchanged  Commission reference document updated from original version Transferred to new SA Health template.
v 2.0	28/05/2013	OCE	Minor amendment to reflect impact on EPAS and Branch name change
v 1.1	28/02/2011	OCE	Minor amendment - titles of regional CEOs to Local Health Network CEOs
v 1.0	17/12/2009	Portfolio Executive	Original PE approved version

## 12. Appendices

*Nil*