



Medical Affairs

DEFENSE HEALTH AGENCY
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MEMORANDUM FOR ALL DEFENSE HEALTH AGENCY MARKETS
LEAD, DIRECT SUPPORT ORGANIZATION, ARMY
LEAD, DIRECT SUPPORT ORGANIZATION, NAVY
LEAD, DIRECT SUPPORT ORGANIZATION, AIR FORCE

SUBJECT: Weight and Height in Metric Units in the Electronic Health Record (EHR)

This memorandum is to inform you that on September 20, 2021, Armed Forces Health Longitudinal Technology Application (AHLTA) will change to metric units only. Work is in progress to change Essentris[®] to metric units only, and we will assess potential modifications to the Composite Health Care System (CHCS), as well. MHS GENESIS[®] already includes metric measurements only, along with a conversion calculator. This means that clinical personnel must use metric units (e.g., kilograms, grams, and centimeters) for all beneficiaries in all EHRs to document weight and height. In Neonatal Intensive Care Units, personnel shall use grams for patient weight entries, as appropriate. Metric units shall also be recorded on all forms, regardless if these forms have been updated; enterprise forms updates are in progress.

This requirement is in accordance with clinical guidance, such as the Institute for Safe Medication Practices (*ISMP Guidelines for Safe Electronic Communication of Medication Information* (Guideline #48)). Between 2016 and 2021, there were over 2,000 Joint Patient Safety Reports in the Military Health System related to weight-based medication dosing errors that impacted pediatric patients ages 1 to 17. The predominant theme that led to error was recording in non-metric units.

Clinical personnel using Essentris[®] and AHLTA must perform weight and height conversions using built-in EHR resources, along with military Medical Treatment Facility (MTF) leadership recommended clinical resources such as conversion charts, if needed. DHA Health Informatics is providing communications through the User Impact Series and Informatics Steering Committees. For additional information or questions, please email: dha.hi.endusertraining@mail.mil.

In addition, we highly encourage MTF leaders to ensure all scales in use in your MTF measure in metric units only or, if dual unit scales are in use (e.g., pounds and kilograms), these scales are permanently set to measure in metric units. Further, effective October 1, 2021, when replacing scales for any reason, consider purchasing scales that measure in metric units only, in order to minimize the risk of dose miscalculation, particularly in pediatric patients.

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