

**§482.25(b)(2)(i) - All drugs and biologicals must be kept in a secure area, and locked when appropriate.****Interpretive Guidelines §482.25(b)(2)(i)**

A secure area means that drugs and biologicals are stored in a manner to prevent unmonitored access by unauthorized individuals. Drugs and biologicals must not be stored in areas that are readily accessible to unauthorized persons. For example, if medications are kept in a private office, or other area where patients and visitors are not allowed without the supervision or presence of a health care professional (for example, ambulatory infusion), they are considered secure. Areas restricted to authorized personnel only would generally be considered “secure areas.” If there is evidence of tampering or diversion, or if medication security otherwise becomes a problem, the hospital is expected to evaluate its current medication control policies and procedures, and implement the necessary systems and processes to ensure that the problem is corrected, and that patient health and safety are maintained. (71 FR 68689)

All controlled substances must be locked. Hospitals are permitted flexibility in the storage of non-controlled drugs and biologicals when delivering care to patients, and in the safeguarding of drugs and biologicals to prevent tampering or diversion. An area in which staff are actively providing care to patients or preparing to receive patients, i.e., setting up for procedures before the arrival of a patient, would generally be considered a secure area. When a patient care area is not staffed, **both** controlled and non-controlled substances are expected to be locked.

Generally labor and delivery suites and critical care units are staffed and actively providing patient care around the clock, and, therefore, considered secure. However, hospital policies and procedures are expected to ensure that these areas are secure, with entry and exit limited to appropriate staff, patients and visitors.

The operating room suite is considered secure when the suite is staffed and staff are actively providing patient care. When the suite is not in use (e.g., weekends, holidays and after hours), it would not be considered secure. A hospital may choose to lock the entire suite, lock non-mobile carts containing drugs and biologicals, place mobile carts in a locked room, or otherwise lock drugs and biologicals in a secure area. If an individual operating room is not in use, the hospital is expected to lock non-mobile carts, and ensure mobile carts are in a locked room. (71 FR 68689)

This regulation gives hospitals the flexibility to integrate patient self-administration of non-controlled drugs and biologicals into their practices as appropriate. When a hospital allows a patient to self-administer selected drugs and biologicals, the hospital authorizes the patient to have access to these medications. This regulation is consistent with the current practice

of giving patients access at the bedside to urgently needed medications, such as nitroglycerine tablets and inhalers. It supports the current practice of placing selected nonprescription medications at the bedside for the patient's use, such as lotions and creams, and rewetting eye drops. Hospitals are expected to address patient self-administration of non-controlled drugs and biologicals in their policies and procedures (see self-administration discussion at §§482.23(c)(6)(i) and 482.23(c)(6)(ii)). This regulation supports hospital development, in collaboration with the medical staff and the nursing and pharmacy departments, of formal patient medication self-administration programs for select populations of patients, including hospital policies and procedures necessary to ensure patient safety and security of medications. The policies and procedures are expected to include measures to ensure the security of bedside drugs and biologicals. They are also expected to address both the competence of the patient to self-administer drugs and biologicals as well as patient education regarding self-administration of drugs and biologicals. (71 FR 68689)

Due to their mobility, mobile nursing medication carts, anesthesia carts, epidural carts and other medication carts containing drugs or biologicals (hereafter, all referred to as "carts") must be locked in a secure area when not in use. Hospital policies and procedures are expected to address the security and monitoring of carts, locked or unlocked, containing drugs and biologicals in all patient care areas to ensure their safe storage and to ensure patient safety. (71 FR 68689)

Medication automated distribution units with security features, such as logon and password or biometric identification, are considered to be locked, since they can only be accessed by authorized personnel who are permitted access to the medications. Such units must be stored in a secure area.

#### **Survey Procedures §482.25(b)(2)(i)**

- Review hospital policies and procedures governing the security of drugs and biologicals to determine whether they provide for securing and locking as appropriate;
- Review hospital policies and procedures governing patient self-administration of drugs and biologicals;
- Observe whether medications in various areas of the hospital are stored in a secure area, and locked when appropriate. Are medication storage areas periodically inspected by pharmacy staff to make sure medications are properly stored?
- Determine that security features in automated medication distribution units are implemented and actively maintained, e.g., that access authorizations are regularly updated to reflect changes in personnel, assignments, etc.
- Interview staff to determine whether policies and procedures to restrict access to authorized personnel are implemented and effective;
- If patient self-administration of drugs and biologicals is permitted, interview patients and staff to determine whether policies and procedures are implemented and effective.