Major Drug Classes

Frequently Prescribed Medications

To be of assistance in the pharmacy, the pharmacy technician must have keen knowledge of the brand and generic names of frequently prescribed medications. There are more than 200 frequently prescribed medications. It is also helpful for the technician to be aware of the clinical uses of each drug. A basic familiarity with these drugs and their uses can enhance the skills of a pharmacy technician. Let’s review some of the brand and generic names and common uses of common medications.

Classification and Uses

Drugs can be classified according to therapeutic action.

Examples include:

Analgesics: used to treat moderate to severe pain.

Key: Generic Names (Brand Names)

- Acetaminophen (Tylenol)
- Acetylsalicylic acid (aspirin)
- Acetaminophen/oxycodeine combination (Percocet)
- Acetaminophen hydrocodone (Vicodin)

Antibiotics: used to treat bacterial infections.

- Amoxicillin (Amoxil)
- Ciprofloxacin (Cipro)
- Levofoxacin (Levaquin)

Anticoagulants: used to prevent blood clots.

- Warfarin sodium (Coumadin)
- Heparin sodium (Heparin)
Anticonvulsants: used in the treatment of seizures.
- Phenytoin sodium (Dilantin)
- Phenobarbital sodium (Dilantin)
- Clonazepam (Klonopin)

Psychotropic agents: used to treat psychiatric issues.
- Clonazepam (Klonopin)
- Fluoxetine (Prozac)
- Olanzapine (Zyprexa)

Drugs can also be classified according to how they work. Drugs classified this way have a similar chemical structure, similar mechanism of action, and similar effects (including side effects).

Examples include:

Ace inhibitors: drug names usually end on the suffix PRIL; common use is to lower blood pressure
- Benazepril (Lotensin)
- Captopril (Capoten).

Beta blockers: drug names usually end in OLOL; reduces heart rate, lowers blood pressure
- Propanolol (Indernal)
- Atenolol (Tenormin)

A complete list of more than 200 frequently dispensed drugs with their generic, brand, and/or trade name along with classification can be found at [www.RxList.com](http://www.RxList.com).

**Question**

1. What are the different ways that drugs can be classified?