

MEDICINES UPDATE

Please display this newsletter so that it is readily available to all staff that have responsibility for the management of medicines.

Administration of controlled drug patches

RQIA has been made aware of an increasing number of incidents where prescribed controlled drug patches had not been applied on time. This includes patches which are required to be administered on a weekly basis (buprenorphine).

Failure to apply pain-relieving patches on time may result in residents or patients receiving inadequate pain relief and they could suffer increased pain and distress which may compromise their quality of life. Under these circumstances, the registered provider of a home may be at risk of breaching the individual's rights under Article 3 of the Human Rights Act (1998). Patients and residents with reduced mental capacity who are unable to voice their discomfort or distress are particularly at risk of receiving inadequate pain relief under these circumstances.

Failure to administer medicines as prescribed is a breach of Regulation 13(4) of the Residential Care Homes Regulations and the Nursing Homes Regulations and the DHSSPS Minimum Standards for Nursing and Residential Care Homes and RQIA has recently taken enforcement action in a number of instances where medicine management has been below the expected standard.

All registered managers and providers must therefore ensure that robust procedures are in place for the management and administration of controlled drugs patches. RQIA must be notified when a patch is not administered at the correct time.

NICE Guidance

At the provider road shows earlier this year reference was made to the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidance which has been published in England (Ref: <http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/sc/SC1.jsp>).

A further reference source has been produced by NICE which may be of interest when you are reviewing your medicine policy and procedures – 'Checklist for health and social care staff developing and updating a care home medicines policy' (Ref: [Managing medicines in care homes: Policy](#))

Anaphylaxis management

It has been brought to our attention that some nursing homes may be stocking EpiPens which do not deliver the dose of adrenaline recommended by the Resuscitation Council (UK) for the management of acute anaphylaxis. Registered managers are advised to review the procedures in place for the management of anaphylaxis and ensure that they have the appropriate medicines available.

Controlled drug changes

As you will be aware tramadol is now classed as a Schedule 3 controlled drug and zopiclone becomes Schedule 4 (Part 1). Neither is required to be stored in a controlled drug cabinet nor to have the administration documented in a controlled drug record book.

Several managers have contacted the pharmacy team to seek advice on what procedures should be followed. In line with best practice if you currently have additional checks in place for the management of diazepam we suggest you include these drugs.

As tramadol is now Schedule 3 and zopiclone is Schedule 4 (Part 1), registered nurses in nursing homes should denature these medicines prior to disposal.

If you have any queries on any of these matters please contact your allocated pharmacist inspector at either the Belfast or Omagh office.

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