

Medicines matters

Issue 3 2017

MHRA repeats valproate warning

An alert was issued earlier this year by the MHRA about the risks associated with using sodium valproate or valproic acid during pregnancy. According to a survey carried out by three epilepsy charities, reported in September by BBC News, suggested that the message has not reached the majority of women for whom it was intended. **Guidance** on dealing with the alert can be found on the UK Government website

Prescription security protocol

Prescription security is one aspect considered by the Care Quality Commission when it inspects a GP practice. To support its practices in achieving a consistent approach to this task, a group of Surrey CCGs have produced a guidance **document**, entitled "Recommendations on the safe and secure management of NHS prescription stationery in GP practices".

Faye's story offers reminder of dangers of opioid overprescribing

NHS South Region has published the heart-breaking thoughts of the parents of a 32-year old woman who died of respiratory arrest in February 2013. The patient had developed back pain in 2010 and had been prescribed an escalating concoction of pain relief. The **document** includes the learning points agreed by the patient's GPs.

Community pharmacies to be paid not to dispense unwanted items

Hull CCG has commissioned a **service** from its community pharmacies to help identify where un-necessary or unwanted medicines are being prescribed. Pharmacy staff will, at the point of pre-prescriptions being handed out, determine from patients whether items have been dispensed that are not required. Where such items are identified, the pharmacist has the discretion not to dispense them. When this occurs, they must inform the patient's GP and, if appropriate, may conduct a medicines use review. For each item not dispensed, the pharmacy will be paid £4 plus 10% of the cost of the medicine not dispensed. The service, for which three years of funding has been agreed, started in May 2017.

Comprehensive osteoporosis advice

A **guide** for using bisphosphonates for osteoporosis, including advice on when to consider a drug holiday, has been produced by Northern Ireland Medicines Management

team. The guide includes a link to a review tool and advises to refer any male patients prescribed denosumab back to the hospital that initiated it to receive treatment, since its use would be off licence.

Carcinogenic risk with lidocaine plasters

The manufacturer of Versatis (lidocaine) plasters has noted that one of the drug's metabolites is carcinogenic and genotoxic in rats, according to Northern Ireland Medicines Management team In its August 2017 **newsletter**. The team recommend that all patients prescribed lidocaine plasters should be reviewed after 2-4 weeks and that treatment must be discontinued if there has been no response after this time.

Tips on how to save on prescribing

Wiltshire CCG has produced a guideline for GP practices offering several tips — some simple, some more substantial — on how to reduce practice prescribing budgets. The guideline can be accessed from the CCG's June/July 2017 **newsletter**. It includes some straightforward brand switches but also signposts GPs to make use of the OpenPrescribing.net website.

Post discharge dietetic service to nursing homes

GPs in Cheshire are advised not to prescribe oral nutrition supplements when nursing home patients are started on them in hospital before the local community dietetic service has conducted a post-discharge assessment. The dieticians promise to see all such patients within 5-7 days of discharge. The advice is provided in Central and Eastern Cheshire CCG's Summer 2017 **newsletter**. The newsletter also offers a colour-coded guide to dose banding with tinzaparin.

Risks of long-term UTI prophylaxis highlighted

Clinicians in Grampian are advised to make patients aware that antibiotics for UTI prophylaxis should not normally be used for more than 6-12 months. According to NHS Grampian's August 2017 **newsletter**, antibiotics used for UTI prophylaxis are intended to allow a period of bladder healing, rather than lifelong protection. The newsletter also highlights the risks associated with long-term use of nitrofurantoin.