

Medicine Matters

Medicines information for care staff in a social setting

Summer 2016

The New Newsletter

Welcome!

Welcome to our new, electronic, re-launched, newsletter aimed at care home services across the North of England.

Medicine Matters newsletter is produced by a team of pharmacist and pharmacy technicians who specialise in supporting care homes in the management of medicines within the Medicine Optimisation team, North of England Commissioning Support (NECS) services working on behalf of the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs).

The aims of the newsletter are to:

- Provide a regular quarterly resource of information specific to medicine issues in care homes
- Deliver a short, informative bulletin that care staff find useful and educational
- Inform managers and staff in care homes of current issues regarding medicine management
- Identify and advise on commonly occurring problems regarding medicines in care homes
- Provide anonymous examples of recent "Lessons Learnt" as a mechanism for services to reflect on their practice and improve processes
- Provide access to specialist advice regarding medicines in care homes

We have decided produce an electronic newsletter to enable the widespread sharing this newsletter. Ideally, we would like care home managers to print out copies and make them available to all staff within the home such as in the staff room or medicine treatment room and discussing at staff meetings or communication forums.

Care Home Pharmacists and Technicians

The Medicine Optimisation service has a team of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians specialist in advising on management of medication in care homes such as advice on storage, use of Medicine Administration Record (MAR) charts, administration or disposal. The team work closely and collaboratively with CCGs and Local Authorities, Care Quality Commission, safeguarding teams, community pharmacy services and GP surgeries and have a wide experience in supporting care homes in the safe management of medicines.

Your local care home team: based in Newburn (Newcastle);

This team primarily focus on supporting the local safeguarding teams and link with the CCG and practice team pharmacy services undertaking medicine reviews across the area.

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The Medicines Optimisation Website

Information, guidance documents and various medicine related tools are accessible via our website. These can be downloaded and many may be adjusted to suit your needs.

NECS Medicines Optimisation website:

<http://medicines.necsu.nhs.uk/resources/care-homes/>

Lessons Learnt



The incident

Whilst this case does not directly relate to a care home patient, it highlights the importance of reading through the patient information leaflet at least once and closely following the manufacturer's instructions.

This cautionary tale relates to the death of a patient in Manchester, who died from an unintentional overdose of a strong pain medication; Fentanyl which was applied as a topical patch.

The background

Fentanyl is a very strong (opioid) painkiller which is often prescribed in the form of a patch. The patch is applied to clean and dry skin and changed every 72 hours. This patch is then designed to slowly release the drug over 72 hours into the bloodstream, where it travels to the brain to exert its effect. However, anything which interferes with this controlled release mechanism, can cause the drug to be released prematurely.

Root causes identified in this case included:

- The patient aged 67, had been using the patches since 2002. However on the morning of her death she had forgotten to remove the old patch and put on a new one.
- She then had a hot bath which caused the drug to be released from the patches very quickly, leading to unintentional overdose.
- She died from the overdose as a result of respiratory depression.

Action Points

Always ensure the old patch is removed before applying a new one

Do not cut or divide the patch



Do not apply direct heat to the patch, e.g. a hot water bottle, direct sunlight, hot bath/shower, electric blanket etc.

If the patient develops a fever contact the GP immediately

When applying the patch, use gloves if possible. If not, wash hands thoroughly after use

If the patient's breathing becomes shallow or weak, remove the patch and contact the GP immediately.

Patches and Pain

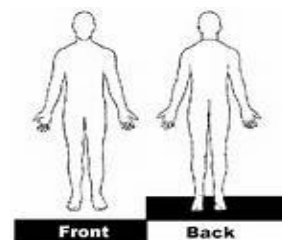


Sometimes medication for pain is given in the form of a transdermal patch. The patch is stuck to the skin and the pain killing ingredient is absorbed through the skin (transdermal) and travels through the bloodstream to its site of action. They are suitable for patients with persistent, moderate to severe pain.

Below is some advice for the application and disposal of **Fentanyl** (e.g. Durogesic™) patches, please read the PIL (patient information leaflet) for other pain killers such as, buprenorphine as they may differ slightly.

- Apply to intact, FLAT non-hairy skin of the upper body or upper arm. Avoid scars/moles, hair can be clipped BUT not shaved.
- Do not use the same site TWICE in a row
- Apply a new patch to a different skin site; clean the skin with water only as soap products can alter absorption. Make sure the skin is dry
- Open the pack and remove the protective backing and immediately apply the patch, pressing firmly
- with the palm of the hand for 30 seconds
- Change the patch every 72 hours at the same time of the day – **remember to remove the old patch first**
- Check the patch daily to ensure it is still in place
- A body map application record sheet can be used to ensure the positioning of the patch including the date, time and site are recorded.
- Disposal: Used patches still contain active drug. Fold the patch over so that it sticks together. Dispose of safely. Wash your hands after patch changes.
- Avoid direct contact with heat (hot water bottles, electric blankets and heat pads).
- Tepid showering is possible as the patches are water-proof, but soaking in the bath is not recommended.

Copies of body maps maybe available via pharmacies or please contact our team for more information.



Future Issues: If you have an idea for an article to be included in a future issue, please contact your local Medicine Optimisation Care Home Team

Please don't forget to share this newsletter with your colleagues!