



Controlled Drugs: Learning from Incidents

North of England
Commissioning Support

Partners in improving local health

April 2020

Issue 15

NECS supports the NHS England Area Team Controlled Drugs Accountable Officer in ensuring the safe management and use of controlled drugs within the North East & Cumbria region. Based on the commonly reported incidents and the lessons learned, we aim to share good practice across the region

CoVid19

Incident reporting during CoVid19—incident reporting should be restricted to those where we consider **serious patient harm or death** and **any theft or significant loss especially where misappropriation by a Healthcare Professional**. Any incident that has caused no harm should be logged within pharmacy / GP practice but then reported through the normal channel once the effects of the pandemic have subsided.

CD Regulations— Temporary changes to certain regulations are awaiting parliamentary approval, we will update you once these are available.

Security of premises—We have received a communication from the Police advising that there has been an increased number of burglaries and attempted burglaries to commercial premises believed due to the COVID-19 restrictions requiring businesses to close. Due to the reduced availability of illicit drugs there is an increased risk of burglary to pharmacy premises. This is a national issue. Pharmacies are asked to be particularly vigilant at this time. Pharmacies and GP practices should ensure adequate security measures are in place:

- CCTV should be in good working order
- Security systems should be checked regularly for tampering (door sensors have been known to be removed during opening hours)
- CD cabinet keys not to be left on the premises overnight
- Delivery drivers to be more vigilant and **NOT** leave vans unlocked and prioritise delivery of CDs where possible
- Community pharmacies will have received a letter from their respective police forces advising re storage of excess CDs. Pharmacies should where possible store CDs in the CD cabinet.
- Community pharmacies may also receive contact from their respective police forces regarding security of CDs, remain vigilant and note the letter and checklist being distributed via NHS England.

For further advice please contact Ken Dale, CDLO on 07919071655

Delivery Issues

- Phoning ahead to inform the person of arrival and arranging where to put the medication
- Not leaving the medication unless they have seen that this has been received by the patient/ representative. This should be witnessed from a distance of greater than 2 metres.
- Not obtaining a signature for delivery—confirm the identity of recipient and state on delivery form.
- Wherever possible, relatives, neighbours and friends of the patient(s) should be encouraged to collect and deliver medication on their behalf where they are fit and able to do so.
- PHE guidance states that volunteers should not deliver schedule 2 & 3 CDs
- Good section on transport of medication. https://www.goodsamapp.org/assets/pdf/Getting_started_as_a_NHS_Transport_Volunteer.pdf
<https://psnc.org.uk/the-healthcare-landscape/covid19/pandemic-delivery-service/>

Have you seen the NECS Medicines Optimisation website?

<http://medicines.necsu.nhs.uk/controlled-drugs/>

Other News

Reporting Illicit Drug Reactions (RIDR) - PHE decided not to continue the Reporting Illicit Drug Reactions (RIDR) pilot beyond the end of 2019/20. The RIDR site no longer accepts reports and closed completely on the **28th February 2020**. It will be archived under the UK Government Web Archive by the [National Archives](#).

Loperamide Misuse—Loperamide misuse was raised at a recent meeting and it has been noted that this is becoming more of a drug of abuse rather than symptom control for heroin withdrawal. This is regularly prescribed for IBS. Substance misuse services have noticed this misuse with clients who had been released from prison, the service received reports from pharmacies that they had experienced the drug being crushed and snorted. We wish to raise awareness of this misuse and to be aware of patients requesting Loperamide to be prescribed or buying large quantities over the counter.

Part dispensed Prescriptions—If during the outbreak, the pharmacy has to close but some prescriptions still require items owed or are part dispensed in the case of FP10MDA's, please contact the prescriber or your local substance misuse service straight away to enable alternative arrangements to be made.

Patient Returns—Pharmacies should still be accepting patient returns. No national announcement has yet been made to say that this service no longer needs to be provided. Suitable precautions should be used when receiving returns that minimise the risks from taking in and storing these medicines. For example, it would be good practice to double bag and segregate these medicines while being stored for at least 72 hours, before being processed in the normal way. The NPA has produced some very practical guidance on this topic and can be found at this link: <https://www.npa.co.uk/coronavirus-updates/faqs-covid-19/>

Diversion—As with many things, COVID-19 is also affecting the supply of illicit drugs. This is resulting in reduced availability, reduced purity and increased price of a whole range of substances. Many will have also seen their usual income decline significantly. This will affect the appeal of prescription medication in particular opiates, Gabapentinoids and Benzodiazepines.

Possibly linked to changes in drug supply, we have had reports that some people are posing as social workers or volunteers in order to access vulnerable residents prescription medication. We would like to ask for your support to raise awareness of this with your patients and service users. Always ask for ID and ring and check if in doubt.

More information about scams during COVID-19 is available from Northumberland County Council here: <https://www.facebook.com/NorthumberlandCC/videos/317693835870758/>

CD Destructions—please notify the team of any requests for authorised witness destructions of schedule 2 CD stock. These requests will be risk assessed during this pandemic—you will be notified in due course if a witness is attending.

CD TEAM : Just to let you all know that **Ken Dale and Emma Post** will be supporting the CD Accountable Officer across the whole North Cumbria and North East Area during the pandemic—please get in touch if you have any queries or concerns. Contact details are below.

If you need advice, or would like an article to be included in a future issue, please contact one of the Controlled Drugs Team Senior Medicines Optimisation Technicians or the CD Liaison Officer:

| | | | |
|---|------------|--------------|---|
| Northumberland Tyne & Wear and North Cumbria | Emma Post | 0191 2172983 | emma.post@nhs.net |
| Durham Darlington & Tees | Laura Luke | 01642 745429 | l.luke@nhs.net / emma.post@nhs.net |
| CD Liaison Officer for all areas | Ken Dale | 07919071655 | ken.dale@nhs.net |