

Medicine Matters

Covid-19 Special Bulletin (4)

North of England
Commissioning Support
Spring 2020

Medicines information for care staff in care homes

Re-use of medicines in care homes

National guidance was published on 28.4.2020 providing a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the potential re-use of medicines (including CDs) within care homes and hospices **in England** during the COVID-19 pandemic: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-reuse-of-medicines-in-a-care-home-or-hospice>

This guidance has been developed in response to the unprecedented COVID-19 situation and the recognition that the re-use of medicines may be appropriate in certain circumstances. It is recommended that medicines should only be re-used in accordance with a medicines re-use scheme and a national SOP has been developed to support care homes and hospices in practical terms, to implement a medicines re-use scheme. This recommendation is only for use during this current pandemic crisis.

The SOP sets out a framework to ensure that medicine re-use is undertaken safely with robust risk assessment processes, documentation and auditable record keeping that is in the best interest of patients. It provides information regarding risk assessment criteria and includes a suggested template to track the risk assessment process and re-allocation of medicines when re-used (Annex B: template log for care homes and hospices on the link above)

Additional supporting information

OPUS have produced further information and templates to support the re-use of medicines process, including suggested letters to residents and their families to explain this new process and gain consent to do so.

<https://opuspharmserve.com/media/2020/05/Guide-for-Re-Using-Medicines-in-Care-Homes-and-Hospices-in-England-during-the-Covid-19-Pandemic-Introduction-Summary.pdf>

See page 2 for further information regarding practicalities of administering re-used medicines

Frequently asked questions

Which medicines should be considered for re-use?

Currently, the main concerns are to minimise the possible pressures on the medicine supply chain as much as possible but in particular regarding End of Life (EoL) and other pain relief medicines.

Guidance has been recently published regarding key medicines required for palliative and end of life care:

<https://apmonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/priority-meds-for-end-of-life-care-290420-final-2.pdf>

Care homes should include the medicine listed in this guidance as priority considerations for re-use.

Note: there is not a definitive list of medicines that should be stored for re-use. There may be other medicines that your supporting GP prescribing or healthcare professional team recommend to be considered for re-use to reflect the needs of your care home residents.

Keep records of any medicines assessed as suitable and being held for re-use and store securely in a sealed container and in accordance with requirements. Ensure these are appropriately annotated 'MEDICINES FOR RE-USE'.

Can the re-use of medicines process include Controlled Drugs (CDs)?

Yes – many controlled drugs are used to support people in the last days of their life and therefore it is important that these medicines are accessible and not disposed of unnecessarily at this time.

Ensure that all processes involving CDs are clearly documented in the CD register to provide a clear account of stock holding at all times – i.e. including when medicines are no longer required for one person but have not been allocated to a second person in the home, the CD register still needs to reflect the stock holding.

Once assessed as suitable for re-use in accordance with the SOP, consider 'booking out' the stock from the current page and transferring the stock balance to another page which is clearly labelled as 'Medicines for Re-use'

Ensure that you continue to follow the legal requirements for management of CDs in care homes at all times.

Do you need a prescription for re-using the medicines?

Yes - a prescription (or order to administer) must be produced to evidence the prescriber's instructions and enable the re-used medicines to be given to a different resident. As the label will not reflect this new instruction (or name of resident) a copy of the prescription is required to be provided to the care home and used as reference when preparing the MAR chart and administering the doses.

Note: this information can be shared electronically via secure email (NHS mail).

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:**

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

Key actions for care homes

- Consider how to implement the re-use of medicines SOP within your setting - ensure there are clear processes and templates in place and that staff in your team understand how and when medicines may be re-used and what measures need to be in place to enable this to be a safe process.
- Pro-actively seek consent from all residents for the re-use of appropriate medicines:
 - their medicines (if no longer needed) to be made available for other patients and/or
 - them to receive a re-used medicine, provided they are deemed safe for re-use.
- Consider the re-use process that should be followed by the care home (described in the SOP).
 - Who will undertake the risk assessment for re-use of medicines?
 - Does the home need to link with other health care professionals to support this process (residential homes) or are there registered health care professionals (nurses) within the home?

If the care home's usual community pharmacy is unable to dispense medicines due to supply issues and if no alternatives are suitable, the care home or hospice will be asked if they have a re-use of medicines process in place, therefore it is prudent for services to plan for this occurring and to ensure staff understand their role and responsibilities.

Administration of re-used medicines

In the event that the re-use of medicines is deemed necessary and there are appropriate and approved supplies of the required medicine available for re-use in the service, staff must ensure that there continues to be safe and robust process of preparing medicines for administration and subsequent record keeping.

Key considerations for administration of re-used medicines:

Ensure that copies of the following documents are accessible for easy reference as part of the preparation for medicine administration process

- Appropriate consent documents completed
- Risk assessment for suitability of the medicines to be re-used
- Copy of the prescribed instructions for the person receiving the re-used medicines
- Up to date MAR chart reflecting the current medicines, dose and instructions

When administering medicines

- Check that the information on the MAR chart corresponds with the prescribed instructions
- Check that the name of the medicine and strength corresponds with the prescribed instructions
- Check the expiry date of the medicine (may be on the outer packaging (if in the manufacturer's box) or on the foil/ blister pack of the medicines.
- Check that you are offering the medicine to the correct resident and the name (and identification) corresponds with the MAR chart and prescribed instruction

Note the administration process should still include all other steps (including checking previous doses given, allergies etc)

Further information is described in the OPUS suite of documents <https://opuspharmserve.com/covid-19-support/>

Although there are differences to the normal administration process, the same principles still apply.

Ask: Do I have enough information to confirm each of the following?

- Right PERSON
- Right MEDICINE
- Right DOSE
- Right TIME
- Right ROUTE
- Right TO REFUSE

Any queries about the repurposing of medicines scheme should be sent to England.covid-medicines@nhs.net to understand any amendments that may be needed to the scheme.

Useful information

CQC have added a new information resource to their medicines information for adult social care services to highlight current issues regarding Covid-19. This page is frequently updated to reflect ongoing issues.

<https://www.cqc.org.uk/guidance-providers/adult-social-care/medicines-information-adult-social-care-services#coronavirus>

Note from the Medicine Optimisation Team: we intend to produce further guidance bulletins in response to common questions arising regarding medicines in care homes or other social care settings

Please continue to refer to current guidance UK government guidance
<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

If you have any questions regarding this newsletter or if you have an idea for an article to be included in a future issue, please contact us on Tel: 0191 2172558 where you will be forwarded to the most appropriate member of the team

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