

Good Practice Guidance F: Medication prescribed to be taken 'when required' in Care Homes

Adapted from the CQC Pharmacy tip: Medication prescribed to be taken when required (27 October 2008) which has now been withdrawn.

Key Points

- Medication with a 'when required' dose (PRN) is usually prescribed to treat short term or intermittent medical conditions i.e. it is not to be taken regularly.
- To ensure the medication is given as intended a specific plan for administration must be recorded in the care plan and ideally kept with the MAR charts.
- Consideration should be given to the resident's capacity to refuse the medication.
- A record does not have to be made at each medicine round to show the resident has been offered the medication.
- The resident should be offered the medication at the times they are experiencing the symptoms either by telling a member of staff or by staff identifying the resident's need as outlined in the care plan.
- The exact time the medication was given and the amount given should be recorded on the MAR.
- 'When required' medication that is still in use and in date should be carried over from one month to the next and not disposed of.

Scenario

During an inspection of a care home providing residential care the inspector found a medicine administration record (MAR) chart with a printed instruction for domperidone 10mg tablets, one to be taken three times a day when required.

Looking at the care plan there was no information recorded to state what the domperidone was for or when it was to be given. The senior carer on duty explained that it was given every day but was not sure what it was for.

What issues does this raise?

- What information is available for staff to know how to administer the medication?
- Do staff know what the medication has been prescribed for?
- Do staff know when to give the medication or ask the resident if they need it?
- Do they know what symptoms to look out for?
- Is the maximum amount to be given in a day or the time to leave between doses recorded?
- Is the resident offered the medication at times other than the usual medication rounds?
- What records need to be made on the MAR chart?

Discussion

- Medication with a 'when required' dose (PRN) is usually prescribed to treat short term or intermittent medical conditions i.e. it is not to be taken regularly. In this example domperidone is used to treat nausea or vomiting. In such circumstances the resident may not need the tablets every day.
- To ensure the medication is given as intended a specific plan for administration must be recorded in the care plan and ideally kept with the MAR charts. Information on why the medication has been prescribed and how to give it should be sought from the prescriber, the supplying pharmacist or other healthcare professionals involved in the treatment of the resident.
- Consideration should be given to the resident's capacity to refuse the medication. When providing staff with information the needs of the resident must be identified e.g. if signs of pain are expressed in a non-verbal way.
- A record does not have to be made at each medicine round to show the resident has been offered the medication. However the care plan should demonstrate that staff know what the medication is for and have made an assessment on whether the resident requires the medication.
- 'When required' medication should not be offered or given only at the times listed on the MAR chart or at specific medication rounds. As the medicine is for occasional use the resident should be offered the medication at the times they are experiencing the symptoms either by

telling a member of staff or by staff identifying the resident's need as outlined in the care plan. The exact time the medication was given and the amount given should be recorded on the MAR chart.

- If 'when required' medication is given regularly then a referral to the prescriber should be considered for a review of the resident's medication, as their medical condition may have changed and the treatment required may need altering.
- Similarly if the medication is not having the expected effects the prescriber should be contacted. In both the above cases the response to the medication should be clearly recorded.
- 'When required' medication that is still in use and in date should be carried over from one month to the next and not disposed of. A record of the quantity carried over should be recorded on the new MAR chart so there is an accurate record of the quantity in stock and to help when performing audits.
- 'When required' medication is best supplied in an original box rather than a monitored dosage system (MDS). This allows for a check on the expiry date and reduces waste (medicines in an MDS expire after 8 weeks).

Things to consider

- Does the medication policy and procedure cover the administration of 'when required' medication?
- Do care plans provide detailed information on medication prescribed as when required?
- Do staff understand what the medication is for?
- Is 'when required' medication regularly given? If so has a review of the medication taken place?
- Is 'when required' medication offered at times to meet the needs of the resident and not just when the drug round occurs?
- Are accurate records of administration made?
- Are 'when required' medicines held in suitable quantities and in date?

Further information

- Further information on managing medicines in care homes is available in Outcome 9 of the [CQC Essential Standards of Quality and Safety](#)

- Further information on ['The handling of medicines in Social Care'](#) can also be found on the Royal Pharmaceutical Society website: www.rpharms.com
- The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) provides guidance and [advice on a number of topics](#) which is available on their website; www.nmc-uk.org
- The National Patient Safety Agency also contains safety alerts related to medicines; <http://npsa.nhs.uk/>

The above links are made available solely to indicate their potential usefulness to users. The user must use their own judgment to determine the accuracy and relevance of the information they contain.

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