

Good Practice Guidance K: Non-prescribed medication in Care Homes

Adapted from the CQC Pharmacy tip: Non-prescribed medication (18 February 2009) which has now been withdrawn.

Key Points

- Non-prescribed medicines are available to residents in care homes and can be purchased either directly by the resident receiving care or by a visitor or by a carer if they have been asked to do so.
- There is the provision for non-prescribed medicines in care homes in the form of homely-remedies for the limited treatment of minor ailments.
- Care Homes are required to include a reference to the controls on non-prescribed medicines in their medication policies and procedures.
- Non-prescribed medicines should be recorded in the care plan and entered on the medicine administration record (MAR).
- Care homes have a duty of care to respond to users of the service who have symptoms of a minor nature, for example, toothache.
- Care homes have a duty of safety to other users of the service and visitors to prevent access to medication and other substances that may cause harm if misused.
- The non-prescribed medicines should be agreed locally with the GP and pharmacist and restricted to a limited list to reduce the risk of adverse reaction and interaction with prescribed medication.
- A homely-remedies documented policy and procedure should include the limited range of remedies that are kept, what they are to be used for and the limit on the duration of treatment (usually 48 hours) before the resident's GP is informed if symptoms persist.

Scenario

During an inspection of a care home, a resident shows the inspector medication that she keeps in her room. Care staff inform the resident that they are unaware of this medication.

On investigation the inspector finds that the resident is prescribed a medicine that is identical to that in her room.

It transpires that the resident had complained of arthritic symptoms to her daughter and GP and both had provided the same medication - available over-the-counter (OTC) and on prescription.

What issues does this raise?

- What safeguards are required?
- What storage is required?
- What records are required?
- Which non-prescribed medicines are allowed?

Discussion

- Non-prescribed medicines may be purchased from pharmacies and other sales outlets and include herbal and homeopathic remedies.
- Non-prescribed medicines are available to residents in care homes. These medicines can be purchased either directly by the resident receiving care or by a visitor or by a carer if they have been asked to do so.
- There is the provision for non-prescribed medicines in care homes in the form of homely-remedies for the limited treatment of minor ailments – see below.
- Care Homes are required to include a reference to the controls on non-prescribed medicines in their medication policies and procedures. This should include encouraging residents and their visitors to inform staff of any non-prescribed medicines kept or requested by residents.

- Non-prescribed medicines should be recorded in the care plan and entered on the medicine administration record (MAR) chart indicating if the resident is self-administering the non-prescribed medicine and if it is kept in their room.
- The MAR chart then provides a complete list of all medicines used by the resident. It can then be used to monitor treatment, decide if a change of treatment is required, identify any interaction with prescribed medication or diet and is a record of all medication present in the care home.
- The dispensing pharmacist and resident's GP should be informed of any non-prescribed medicines being taken by residents in the care home. This will ensure a complete profile of medication is included in their patient medication records to identify any interaction with prescribed medication or diet and monitor for possible adverse effects.
- In the interest of identifying any issues or potential medicines interactions, it is encouraged that the purchase of non-prescribed medicines should be from the pharmacist serving the home. Anyone purchasing medicines for a resident, including the resident themselves, should be encouraged to consult a pharmacist to ensure the medicine is appropriate for the resident.
- If residents require a carer to administer their non-prescribed medicines then they should be encouraged to store it with their prescribed medication. However, if the resident is self-administering then non-prescribed medicines should be kept in locked storage in their room.
- Care homes have a duty of safety to other users of the service and visitors to prevent access to medication and other substances that may cause harm if misused.
- Care homes have a duty of care to respond to residents who have symptoms of a minor nature, for example, toothache. How the provider meets this duty is to be included in their documented policies and procedures and may include the use of homely or household remedies.
- Within Oxfordshire it is expected that residents can access treatment for such minor ailments as would someone in their own home; the GP should therefore not be requested to prescribe for these situations.

- Non-prescribed medicines for the general treatment of minor ailments should be kept in the medication storage but, separated from prescribed medication.
- The non-prescribed medicines should be agreed locally with the GP and pharmacist and restricted to a limited list to reduce the risk of adverse reaction and interaction with prescribed medication. Homely-remedies for general use are neither supplied on prescription nor labelled for individuals.
- A homely-remedies documented policy and procedure should include the limited range of remedies that are kept, what they are to be used for and the limit on the duration of treatment (usually 48 hours) before the resident's GP is informed if symptoms persist.
- It is good practice to request GPs to endorse their agreement to the documented policy and procedure by signing the document.
- Please refer to the; "Oxfordshire PCT Guidelines for Appropriate Prescribing of 'Homely and Household Remedies' for Service Users resident in either Care Homes or Care Homes with Nursing" for further information on developing a homely remedies policy.

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/>

- Oxfordshire PCT Guidelines for The Use of Homely Remedies in Care Homes (with or without nursing).

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.

Oxfordshire CHUMS Working Group & Medicines Management Team