

Clozapine side effects



REPORT

- Clozapine is an antipsychotic medicine and a third line treatment for schizophrenia.
- In the majority of cases clozapine will be prescribed by a psychiatrist and dispensed by a hospital pharmacy. It can also be supplied by community pharmacists if they have registered as a provider and completed the required training course.
- A lack of understanding about the side effects of clozapine as well the impact of missing clozapine doses, and how this can manifest in secondary care has been raised as a serious safety concern.

LEARN

- Pharmacists registered to provide a clozapine service are aware of the need for mandatory regular blood monitoring. However, mortality associated with gastro-intestinal side effects (specifically constipation) is greater than the mortality rate due to blood disorders. If a patient is admitted into hospital experiencing side effects of clozapine, they should inform their doctor that they are taking clozapine.
- There are also other risks associated with clozapine and hospital admissions. If a patient taking clozapine is admitted to hospital for **any reason** they should inform their doctor that they are taking clozapine for the following reasons:
 - Doses are sometimes omitted when a patient is first admitted. Sudden discontinuation of clozapine may result in an a severe relapse of psychotic symptoms.
 - Omission of clozapine for more than 48 hours necessitates re-titration of the dose. Starting a patient back on the same dose can lead to harm.
 - Patients admitted to hospital will often have an enforced break from smoking. Smoking induces clozapine metabolism. As such, smokers who are admitted to hospital whilst taking clozapine, must have their doses reduced to prevent toxicity, if they stop smoking.

SHARE

- These issues was raised at the Northern Ireland Medicine Safety Conference.
- Details were shared with Medication Safety Officers at the Community Pharmacy Patient Safety Group meeting. MSOs will disseminate learnings via their networks.
- Details were published on the [Pharmacy Safety website](#), and shared with key stakeholders, including LPCs.

ACT

- Pharmacists providing a clozapine service should discuss smoking status with these patients and highlight the risk.
- Pharmacy teams have been reminded to advise patients and their carers to inform clinicians that they are taking clozapine if they are admitted to hospital.
- Health Care Professionals should note smoking status if reporting an incident or ADR involving clozapine to aid future learning & improve care.
- For patients who have been admitted to hospital, the secondary care facility should contact the pharmacy that supplies their clozapine, to ensure they are aware of the admission.

REVIEW

- The Patient Safety Group will work with secondary care colleagues to monitor the issue.