Reducing harm from high-risk medicines

Several adverse incidents involving ‘high-risk medicines’ have been reported which may have been prevented if there had been greater awareness of the risks associated with the medication. This poster highlights examples of high-risk medicines, however it is not intended as a definitive list and you may wish to add other high-risk medicines noted in your practice to the poster.

Prescribers have a key role in patient safety by:
- Ensuring that medicines are prescribed appropriately
- Identifying patients on high-risk medicines, ensuring they have regular medication review, appropriate education and advice around compliance

Narrow therapeutic index
- Lithium
- Theophylline
- Anti-epileptics
- Immunosuppressants e.g. ciclosporin, tacrolimus

Risk of toxicity or serious adverse effects
- Insulin
- Digoxin
- Methotrexate
- Opioids
- Hypoglycaemics
- Cancer medicines

Cardiovascular adverse effects
- Diuretics
- Beta blockers
- NSAIDs

Risk of bleeding
- Heparins e.g. enoxaparin, heparin flush, heparin injection
- Oral Anticoagulants e.g. warfarin, apixaban, dabigatran, rivaroxaban, edoxaban
- Antiplatelets e.g. aspirin, clopidogrel, ticagrelor

Other high risk medicines
- Red & Amber medicines
  ‘More than 3’ rule
  more than three tablets or capsules needed to make up one dose
- Other medicines noted in our practice:

Supporting information

www.medicinesgovernance.hscni.net