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To: All GPs

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Dear Colleague

RE: Risks when dispensing medicines into monitored dosage systems (MDS)

I am writing to alert you to the risks of errors that can arise when prescribing medicines to be supplied to patients in compliance aids or monitored dosage systems (MDS).

There have been a number of recent errors involving prescriptions dispensed into compliance aids which have resulted in serious adverse reactions for patients.

Community pharmacists have already received a Medicines Safety Alert (March 2010) highlighting dispensing issues in relation to MDS. This letter to GPs focuses on prescribing issues, some of which will require communication with local community pharmacies.

The main learning points which have resulted from recent incidents are:

- Both the GP practice and the pharmacy should hold a record of patients who are receiving medications in a compliance aid and this information should be clearly visible on the patient record when prescriptions are being prepared by the practice.
- The practice must take steps to ensure communication with the community pharmacist if there are any changes to the patient's medication regimen, including any changes following discharge from hospital. This communication should take place as soon as possible after the change has been made to ensure that further compliance aids issued to the patient contain the correct medication.
- Any communication about changes in medication must be directly between the prescriber and the pharmacist, not via third parties. A written record of changes made by verbal communication between the prescriber and the pharmacist should be made in the patient's notes in the surgery.

- When medication is required to be taken at a specific time of day, this should be stated on the prescription eg metformin - taken at meal times; simvastatin – taken in the evening; bisphosphonates taken after rising, half an hour before breakfast. This will assist in the correct labelling and preparation of compliance aids.
- A review of the procedures in place in your practice around the management of patients receiving compliance aids should be carried out to ensure that your arrangements are as robust and safe as possible.

Please be vigilant when prescribing medicines that are supplied to patients in a compliance aid and ensure that protocols and procedures are in place to make the supply of medicines as safe as possible.

Yours sincerely



J Brogan

Mr Joe Brogan
Asst Director Integrated Care
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