

To: All Community Pharmacies
Cc: (see attached distribution list)

HSCB Ref: ICPL/2018/029

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Dear Colleague

RISK OF HUMAN ERROR WITH ROBOTIC DISPENSING SYSTEMS IN COMMUNITY PHARMACY

The purpose of this letter is to highlight a recent Serious Adverse Incident (SAI) involving a robotic system and to remind Community Pharmacies that they should have robust Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in place to cover all aspects of the dispensing and supply process, including dispensing robots where applicable.

Due to human error, a white skillet manually labelled Prograf[®] 5mg picked by a robotic system actually contained Prograf[®] 0.5mg. The contents of the skillet were added to an original pack of 5mg at the assembly of a prescription. The pharmacist did not notice this at the final check and the prescription was dispensed to the patient.

Fortunately on this occasion the patient came to no harm, but incidents involving the high risk drug tacrolimus have the potential to have serious consequences for patients, including toxicity and graft rejection.

Robotic systems will operate in various ways depending on the supplier and individual set-up however some of the transferable learning is outlined below.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Robotic systems select medications based on information received from the operators and/or packaging. If the medications inside the

packet are incorrect the robot will not detect this. Staff should be aware of this and SOPs should take account of this.

- Use of skillets or part-packs in robots should be risk assessed, with particular attention given to high-risk medications¹. If skillets are used, checking assembly and labelling by a second person before being placed into the robot will reduce error risk.
- Final accuracy checks should include a visual check of contents, especially when more than one pack was used in assembly or skillets have been used.

Robotic systems do have a role in reducing error however will not eliminate it completely. Community pharmacists and their staff play a key role in patient safety by ensuring that prescriptions are dispensed accurately regardless of assembly method.

Yours sincerely,



Joe Brogan
Assistant Director of Integrated of Care
Head of Pharmacy and Medicines Management

¹ <http://www.medicinesgovernance.hscni.net/primary-care/high-risk-medicines/>

RE: RISK OF HUMAN ERROR WITH ROBOTIC DISPENSING SYSTEMS IN COMMUNITY PHARMACY

	To – for Action	Copy		To – for Action	Copy
HSC Trusts			PHA		
CEXs		✓	CEX		✓
Medical Director		✓	Medical Director/Director of Public Health		✓
Directors of Nursing		✓	Director of Nursing/AHPs		✓
Directors of Social Services			PHA Duty Room		
Governance Leads		✓	AD Health Protection		
Directors of Acute Services			AD Service Development/Screening		
Directors of Community/Elderly Services			AD Health Improvement		
Heads of Pharmacy		✓	AD Nursing		✓
Allied Health Professional Leads			AD Allied Health Professionals		
Directors of Human Resources			Clinical Director Safety Forum		
NIAS			HSCB		
CEX			CEX		✓
Medical Director			Director of Integrated Care		✓
RQIA			Director of Social Services		
CEX		✓	Director of Commissioning		
Medical Director		✓	Alerts Office		✓
Director of Nursing		✓	Dir PMSI & Corporate Services		
Director for Social Care			Primary Care (through Integrated Care)		
NIMDTA			GPs		
CEX / PG Dean		✓	Community Pharmacists	✓	
QUB			Dentists		
Dean of Medical School		✓	BSO		
Head of Nursing School			Director of Human Resources		
Head of Social Work School			Open University		
Head of Pharmacy School		✓	Head of Nursing Branch		
Head of Dentistry School			DoH		
UU			CMO office		✓
Head of Nursing School			CNO office		✓
Head of Social Work School			CPO office		✓
Head of Pharmacy School		✓	CSSO office		
Head of School of Health Sciences (AHP Lead)			CDO office		
Clinical Education Centre		✓	Safety, Quality & Standards Office		✓
NIPEC		✓	NI Social Care Council		
GAIN Office		✓	Safeguarding Board NI		
NICPLD		✓	NICE Implementation Facilitator		
NI Medicines Governance Team Leader for Secondary Care		✓	Coroners Service for Northern Ireland		