

Monitoring GP Prescribing of Controlled Drugs

HSCB Pharmacy and Medicines Management Team



Picture 1

Background

The Controlled Drugs (Supervision of Management and Use) Regulations, Northern Ireland 2009, came into effect in October 2009. Under the regulations each organisation is responsible for monitoring the prescribing of controlled drugs (CDs), assessing and investigating concerns and taking appropriate action where necessary.



- To develop a process to allow the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) to monitor prescribing of CDs by GPs
- To identify potential misuse of CDs by GPs or patients and to obtain assurance that CDs are used appropriately.

1. Schedule 1 and 2 CDs and Buprenorphine

Quarterly practice reports showing 'traffic light' indicators are used to monitor stock and patient prescribing (Picture 1):

- **Red Dot:** Prescribing above the upper control limit (UCL). This is 3 standard deviations (SD) above the mean (top 1% of prescribing)
- **Amber Dot:** Prescribing between the mean and UCL
- **Green Dot:** Prescribing between the mean and no prescribing.

Consideration is given to discussing with, or requesting further information from, practices where the report shows:

Red dots in the most recent quarters for a particular CD and/or overall CD prescribing or unusual prescribing patterns.

CD	AprJun 09	JulSep 09	OctDec 09	JanMar 10	AprJun 10	JulSep 10	OctDec 10	JanMar 11
Total volume of CD prescribing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Total volume of CD prescribing minus Methadone liquid, Oxycodone liquid, Buprenorphine tabs	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Alfentanil inj	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Buprenorphine inj	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Buprenorphine patches	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Buprenorphine tabs	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Cocaine eye drops	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Cyclimorph inj	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Diamorphine inj	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Diamorphine tabs	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Dihydrocodeine inj	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Clonidine tabs	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Fentanyl intranasal	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Fentanyl oral	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Fentanyl patches	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Hydromorphone caps	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Methadone inj	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Methadone liquid	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Methadone tabs	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Morphine inj (excl. Cyclimorph)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Morphine oral	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Morphine oral solutions	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Morphine suppositories	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Nabilone caps (Red List Drug)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Oxycodone caps and tabs	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Oxycodone inj	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Oxycodone liquid	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Pentazocine caps, tabs, suppos	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Pentazocine inj	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Pethidine inj	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Pethidine tabs	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sativex oral spray (Red List Drug)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Tramipentalol tabs	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

2. Schedule 3-5 CDs

Quarterly reports in the form of control charts (Picture 2) are used to monitor stock and patient prescribing of:

- Strong analgesics**, eg codeine, and
- Hypnotics and Anxiolytics**, eg Z drugs and benzodiazepines

Each control chart shows practice positions in relation to the Local Commissioning Group (LCG) mean and UCL, and to the HSCB mean and UCL. The UCLs represent 2 SDs above the mean - top 5% of prescribing.

Consideration is given to discussing with, or requesting further information from, practices which **are at or above the UCL for the LCG area or show unusual patterns of prescribing.**

A further prescribing report shows other Sch 3-5 CDs, eg growth hormones. This is discussed at the annual practice visit.

Follow-up and Record-Keeping

Information received from practices is reviewed, and discussed with HSCB Medical Advisers if necessary. If changes are recommended, appropriate action(s) is agreed. Concerns identified are reported to the AO.

All activity in relation to CD monitoring is recorded on the HSCB CD database.

Method

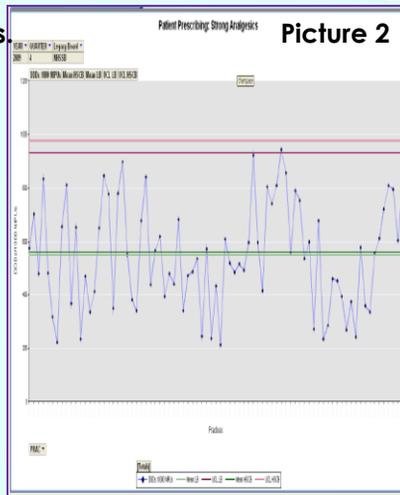
The HSCB Pharmacy and Medicines Management Team consulted with stakeholders to develop a robust CD monitoring process. This was approved by the HSCB Accountable Officer (AO).



The monitoring process has been in place for over two years and involves HSCB Medicines Management Advisers (MMA) reviewing CD prescribing data, **for both NHS stock and patient prescribing**, on a quarterly basis.

The process is divided into two parts:

1. Monitoring of Schedule 1 and 2 CDs and buprenorphine (Schedule 3)
2. Monitoring the remainder of Schedule 3-5 CDs.



Outcomes

The CD monitoring process has led to:

- Greater GP awareness of place in therapy of, and risks with, CDs eg fentanyl
- More appropriate CD stock levels held by GPs eg benzodiazepines**
- Improved patient review processes leading to dose reduction(s) and/or gradual withdrawal eg oxycodone
- **Individual referrals to secondary care or addiction services eg cyclimorph**