

Implementation of the NPSA Alert - Safer Lithium Therapy - in Northern Ireland

NI Regional HSCB and Secondary Care Trusts Medicines Governance Team, Northern Ireland

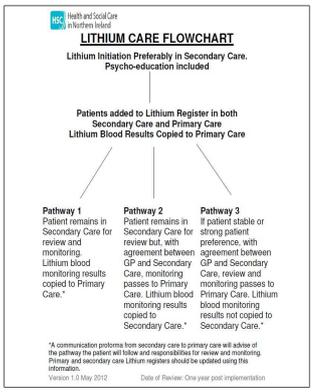
Background

New NI regional guidance was developed to support the requirements of the 'NPSA Alert: Safer Lithium Therapy' ie ensure:

- Patients are monitored according to NICE guidance
- Systems are in place to communicate test results and manage interactions
- Patients receive ongoing education and a record book to track relevant tests
- Monitoring is checked to ensure it is safe to issue/dispense prescriptions

The guidance consists of:

- Lithium Care Flowchart outlining three possible pathways patients may follow
- Lithium Secondary Care Initiation and Monitoring Care Pathway
- Lithium Shared-Care Guideline outlining monitoring in line with NICE



Implementation

This required action by GPs and Trust Mental Health Teams in three main areas:

1. Following agreement between the Mental Health Team and GP, patients were allocated to one of the three review and monitoring care pathways
2. GP practices and Trusts reconciled their lithium registers indicating each patient's allocated care pathway. Systems were then put in place to ensure patients were reviewed and monitored according to this pathway, monitoring occurred in line with the 'Secondary Care Initiation and Monitoring Care Pathway'/'Shared-Care Guideline' and monitoring results were communicated to GPs/Trusts accordingly
3. NPSA Lithium Therapy Information Packs were provided to Trusts and GP practices with guidance on responsibilities for issuing to patients.

Follow-up and Outcomes

In March 2013, three months following the launch of the Regional Guidance, a Self-Assessment completed by over 100 GP practices indicated that:

50% of practices allocated a Care Pathway for patients on lithium

40% of practices had protocols in place for monitoring and education of patients on lithium

For 50% of practices, this was 'work-in-progress'

Further self-assessment planned October 2014. (results included if available in time for conference/poster completion)

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Aim

Prior to implementation of the new guidance it was often unclear to prescribers (GPs) if patients on lithium were being monitored appropriately. The aim of the guidance is to improve systems for review and monitoring of patients on lithium.

A group, consisting of representatives from primary and secondary care, was convened to implement the guidance and address any issues arising