

Medication Safety Briefing



Number 2

July 2015

Changes to discharge medicines

Discharge prescriptions need to be prepared in a timely way to avoid unnecessary delays to discharges. However sometimes changes in medication are required just prior to discharge and after a discharge prescription has already been prepared and dispensed.

A medication incident occurred where a patient was being reviewed just prior to discharge from hospital, changes were made to the patient's medication however those changes were not updated on the discharge prescription.

The patient was already on aspirin and was commenced on rivaroxaban during the admission. A discharge prescription was written and both medicines were prescribed and dispensed. The Kardex was reviewed prior to discharge and aspirin discontinued on the Kardex however the discharge prescription was not updated and the patient was discharged with both rivaroxaban and aspirin. Following discharge, nursing home staff noticed bruising on the patient. The patient's GP contacted the hospital consultant to review the patient's medication and aspirin was discontinued.

It is important that systems for the prescription, dispensing and issue of medicines to patients on discharge are reviewed and where appropriate, changes made to reduce the risks of this type of incident occurring.

Key points

- Medical Staff must ensure that when making changes to a patient's medicines near to the point of discharge, confirmation is sought as to whether a discharge prescription has already been written. Where a discharge prescription has already been written, this must be updated and nursing and midwifery staff alerted to the change.
- Where changes are made to an inpatient's prescription after it has been dispensed by pharmacy, nursing and midwifery staff must return all medications previously supplied to pharmacy with the amended discharge prescription for re-dispensing. Out of hours, follow local procedures for supply of discharge medicines out of hours.
- At the point of discharge, the health professional issuing medication to the patient must check that the medication listed on the discharge prescription coincides with that prepared by pharmacy. If there are any discrepancies these must be referred to the Pharmacy Department or, outside normal opening hours, the Emergency Duty Pharmacist. The health professional must also check that there have been no changes to the current medicines prescribed on the Kardex since the discharge prescription was written. If there are any changes that have not been updated on the discharge prescription, this must be referred to Medical Staff.
- Medicines Codes or Policies must include guidance to conduct checks at the point of discharge to ensure that the discharge prescription and any medicines being sent home with the patient are accurate and up to date.