

# Medication Safety Today



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## Hyperkalaemia Update

An insulin-glucose infusion is a safe, commonly used treatment for hyperkalaemia; however serious problems may arise if too much insulin is administered in error. Hyperkalaemia kits and treatment guidelines<sup>1</sup> were introduced to acute adult wards in all Trusts from August 2008.

A recent audit took place across hospitals to evaluate the availability and accessibility of hyperkalaemia kits.

The key recommendations from the audit are:

- Trusts should ensure continued availability of hyperkalaemia kits and that staff continue to be informed of the need to use them.
- Hyperkalaemia kits should not be stored in a locked cupboard.
- Trusts should ensure GAIN poster<sup>2</sup> 'Emergency management of hyperkalaemia,' is displayed where the kit is stored.
- Staff should ensure that once the seal on a kit has been broken, that it is returned to pharmacy as soon as possible for replacement.
- Induction for medical, nursing and pharmacy staff should include information on the use and location of the hyperkalaemia kit.

**Always remember that the dose of soluble insulin to treat hyperkalaemia is 10 UNITS and the dose must be second checked by the senior nurse on duty.**

1. Guideline for the treatment of hyperkalaemia in adults - [http://www.gain-ni.org/Publications/Guidelines/hyperkalaemia\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.gain-ni.org/Publications/Guidelines/hyperkalaemia_guidelines.pdf)
2. Emergency management of hyperkalaemia in adults - <http://www.gain-ni.org/Publications/Guidelines/hyper%20poster.pdf>

## Buccal Midazolam

Medication incidents have occurred involving different preparations of buccal midazolam<sup>1</sup>. Buccal midazolam may be considered as an alternative to rectal diazepam for the treatment of prolonged seizures and is available from several different manufacturers<sup>2</sup>. The two most commonly-used products are:

- Buccolam<sup>®</sup> 5mg/mL oral liquid. This product has recently received a licence for paediatric use and is available in a range of prefilled oral syringes.
- Epistatus<sup>®</sup> 10mg/mL oral liquid (unlicensed). This is available from a 'specials' manufacturer in a multi-dose bottle and as prefilled oral syringes.

It should be noted that another generic buccal midazolam 10mg/ml product (unlicensed) is available from 'specials' manufacturer, UL Medicines.

It is recommended that all patients currently receiving buccal midazolam preparations are reviewed to ensure the preparation prescribed corresponds with the patient's Epilepsy Care Plan and that an incorrect preparation has not been inadvertently prescribed or dispensed. Further information has also been distributed to GPs and community pharmacists.

1. <http://www.nelm.nhs.uk/en/NeLM-Area/News/2012---February/29/NPSA-Signal-Prevention-of-harm-with-buccal-midazolam/>
2. <http://www.mhra.gov.uk/Safetyinformation/DrugSafetyUpdate/CON1319311>



Zuclophenthixol belongs to the category of medicines known as antipsychotics or neuroleptics. Injectable zuclophenthixol is available in products as two different forms:

- zuclophenthixol acetate – Clopixol Acuphase<sup>®</sup> (100mg in 2ml), which has a rapid onset and short duration of action, and is used for the initial treatment of acute psychosis.
- zuclophenthixol decanoate – Clopixol<sup>®</sup> injection (200mg in 1ml) and Clopixol<sup>®</sup> Conc. Injection (500mg in 1ml), which is long acting, and is used for maintenance treatment.

These products are NOT interchangeable.

Medication errors can occur when the faster acting zuclophenthixol acetate is used when zuclophenthixol decanoate, a longer acting formulation, is intended, and vice versa.

To ensure that the patient receives the correct preparation:

- ✓ Always prescribe zuclophenthixol by brand name
- ✓ Exercise care when selecting injectable zuclophenthixol for dispensing or administration

**Note:** Clopixol Acuphase<sup>®</sup> should only be prescribed under the advice and authority of a consultant psychiatrist and in line with Trust policy on rapid tranquilisation. Appropriate physical observations should be conducted when Clopixol Acuphase<sup>®</sup> is being administered.

## Oral Tacrolimus - brand name only



Tacrolimus is an immunosuppressant medicine which may be given orally to prevent or treat organ transplant rejection. It has a narrow therapeutic index, and even minor differences in blood levels have the potential to cause graft rejection reactions.

There is a growing number of oral tacrolimus products available on the market, for example Prograf<sup>®</sup>, Adoport<sup>®</sup>, Modigraf<sup>®</sup>, Advagraf<sup>®</sup> which are not interchangeable. This increases the potential for inadvertent switching between products, which has been associated with reports of toxicity and graft rejection.

Therefore oral tacrolimus products should be prescribed and dispensed by brand name only<sup>1</sup>.

1. DHSSPS HSS(MD)19/2012 [www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/hss-md-19-2012.pdf](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/hss-md-19-2012.pdf)

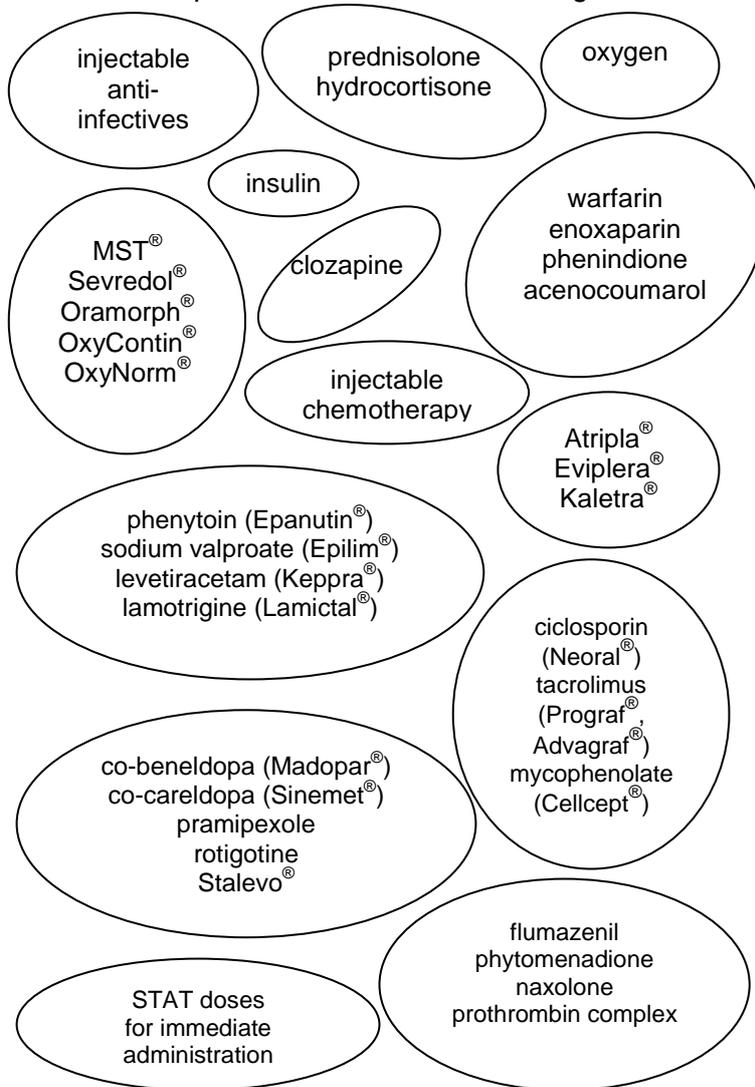


## Give it on time

Work continues in trusts to minimise delayed and omitted medicines following recommendations from the National Patient Safety Agency<sup>1</sup>.

In particular serious harm can occur when **critical** medicines are omitted or delayed.

Some examples of critical medicines are given below.



These are just some examples. What specific examples apply to your clinical area?

Do you know how to access critical medicines in your area?

1. [http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/hsc\\_sqsd\\_3\\_10.pdf](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/hsc_sqsd_3_10.pdf)

If you have any comments on this newsletter, please contact Sharon O'Donnell, Medicines Governance pharmacist on Ext: 2600 at Belfast City Hospital or by e-mail at [Sharon.Odonnell@belfasttrust.hscni.net](mailto:Sharon.Odonnell@belfasttrust.hscni.net) Further copies of this newsletter and past editions can be viewed at [www.medicinesgovernanceteam.hscni.net](http://www.medicinesgovernanceteam.hscni.net) or on your Trust intranet.