Medication Safety Today

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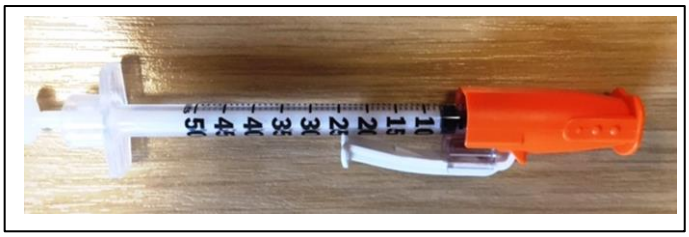
Hyperkalaemia - update to kit

Hyperkalaemia kits now contain 'Safety Glide' insulin syringes. These insulin syringes incorporate safer needle technology and reduce the risk to staff of needle stick injuries.

The 'Safety Glide' insulin syringe is shown below:

Before use



After use with the needle covered by 'Safety Glide' mechanism

Remember, the dose of insulin required to treat hyperkalaemia in an adult is **10 units**. Further information on treatment of hyperkalaemia is available in the GAIN guidelines[1].

1. http://www.gain-ni.org/images/Uploads/Guidelines/GAIN_Guidelines_Treatment_of_Hyperkalaemia_in_Adults_GAIN_02_12_2014.pdf

If you have any comments on this newsletter, please contact Sharon O'Donnell, Medicines Governance pharmacist on 02890638129 at Royal Hospitals or by e-mail at sharon.odonnell@belfasttrust.hscni.net. Further copies of this newsletter can be viewed at www.medicinesgovernanceteam.hscni.net or on your Trust intranet.

Gaba confusion

Pregabalin and gabapentin are both medicines used for epilepsy and neuropathic pain however they have very different dose regimens. Medication incidents have occurred involving prescribing, administration and dispensing where these medicines have been confused. Pregabalin is much more potent than gabapentin meaning that much lower doses are used. For example in neuropathic pain, the maximum dose of gabapentin is 2.4g per day whereas the maximum dose of pregabalin is 600mg per day.

Safety Tips:

- ☑ Be aware of the risk of confusion between these two medicines.
- ☑ Remember that they have very different dose regimens.
- ☑ Always check that the dose is within the recommended dose range for the medicine.

A balanced diet

An increasing number of incidents are being reported where patients have been given the incorrect oral nutritional product. There are now many different products available with similar sounding names and similar appearance so staff should be vigilant before supplying to a patient:

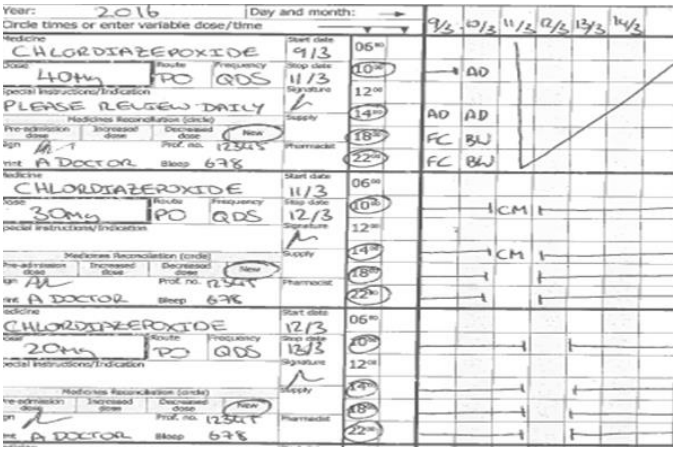
- ☑ Check the name on the product before ordering from Pharmacy.
- ☑ Always double check before supply to the patient.

Reducing errors

Some medicines require the prescription of reducing doses over time. It is important to make sure that the intended directions are clear on the Kardex.

If initiating a reducing dose of a medicine on the Kardex:

- ☑ Draw a zigzag line from the last administration of the current dose, through the remainder of the administration box.
- ☑ The stop box should be dated and signed.
- ☑ Prescribe each reducing dose individually, ensuring to clearly cross through dates and times administration is not required (see example below)
- ☑ This will help prevent the patient being administered an incorrect or double dose.



One lump or two

Gliclazide tablets are available in two formulations, modified release and non-modified release. Gliclazide modified release 30mg is approximately equivalent to 80mg of non-modified release gliclazide. Medication incidents have occurred when patients have been prescribed gliclazide 120mg ordinary release and have received 120mg of modified release gliclazide. 120mg of modified release gliclazide is equivalent to 320mg of non-modified release gliclazide.

- ☑ Be aware of the two different formulations of gliclazide.
- ☑ Check which formulation is intended, particularly when patients are prescribed 120mg dose.
- ☑ Remember the 'More than 3' rule. If you need more than 3 tablets, capsules, vials, ampoules etc. to prepare a single dose of a medicine, stop and check:
  - Have you read the prescription correctly?
  - Is the prescription correct?
  - Have you selected the correct preparation to administer?

Interaction - miconazole and warfarin

The DHSSPS issued a Patient Safety Alert in June following the report of a death in Wales[1]. The patient who took warfarin for atrial fibrillation was prescribed miconazole oral gel for the treatment of oral thrush. The MHRA also issued a reminder in June 2016[2].

Miconazole (Daktarin®, Daktacort®) is an antifungal medicine indicated for the prevention and treatment of various infections of the mouth, throat, skin, nails and genitals. Warfarin is an anticoagulant used for the prophylaxis of thromboembolic events. Miconazole inhibits the metabolism of warfarin, which in turn increases the INR (international normalised ratio), resulting in an enhanced anticoagulant effect and bleeding risk.

Safety Tips:

- ☑ Before prescribing miconazole containing products, prescribers must check the patient's medical and drug history, in particular the current use of warfarin and other coumarin anticoagulants.
- ☑ Before dispensing or selling miconazole containing products, pharmacy staff must check the patient's medical and drug history, in particular the current use of warfarin and other coumarin anticoagulants.
- ☑ All healthcare professionals prescribing, supplying or administering miconazole products must check for drug interactions using an appropriate resource and take appropriate action to ensure patient safety.

1. http://www.patientsafety.wales.nhs.uk/news/41541
2. https://www.gov.uk/drug-safety-update/topical-miconazole-including-oral-gel-reminder-of-potential-for-serious-interactions-with-warfarin

All change at the next station

Sometimes patients need to increase or decrease a dose of an existing medicine. In an outpatient setting, when a patient already has a supply of the medicine at home, no new supply may be required.

Medication incidents have occurred when staff have explained a dose change in terms of the number of tablets or capsules to take but the patient has had a different strength at home and then taken the wrong dose.

When explaining a dose change to a patient it is important to find out exactly what strength their current supply of the medicine is at home and explain the new dose based on that. Check patient understanding and consider providing the patient with written information about the new dose.