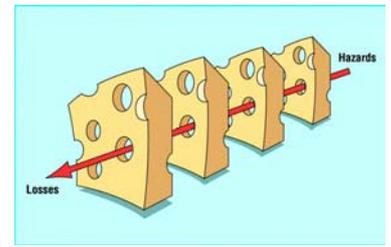


Northern Ireland Medicines Governance Team



SAFETY MEMO 11

To: Directors of Pharmaceutical Services / Trust Pharmacy Managers

Cc: Dr N Morrow, Chief Pharmaceutical Officer, DHSSPS
Directors of Pharmacy, HSS Boards
Dr J Mairs, Regional Procurement Pharmacist

From: Medicines Governance Team

Date: 29th August 2006

Re: Ensuring safer practice with high dose ampoules of diamorphine and morphine

Recent communication from DHSSPS and the National Patient Safety Agency (NPSA) has highlighted issues surrounding the use of high dose ampoules of diamorphine and morphine (30mg or greater)¹⁻².

Many of the actions within the NPSA safer practice notice require multidisciplinary involvement, however this memo is to advise of practical steps that pharmacy departments can take to support action points 1 and 4 within the NPSA safer practice notice.

Storage and handling of high strength opiate ampoules

- Ensure wherever possible there is suitable differentiation between morphine and diamorphine packaging and between different strengths procured.
- Apply an additional label to high strength opiate ampoules to alert users to the higher strength, for example

High dose opiate injection

Caution - note the strength and
medicine name

- A number of trusts have already introduced CD stock lists for wards and departments to improve stock control and management. Where CD stock lists are in operation:
 - Review CD stock lists to ensure they do not include high strength opiate ampoules, wherever possible.
 - Ensure that appropriate procedures are in place so that stock list amendments require the approval of a pharmacist.

- Where CD stock lists do not operate, restrict the routine issue of high-strength opiate ampoules to a minimum number of areas. Define these areas on a 'restricted issue list' that is available to all who issue controlled drugs.
- Ensure a system is in place for return/retrieval of high strength opiate ampoules supplied to non-stock areas or areas not on the restricted issue list as soon as they are no longer required by the area.
- Update the procedure for three monthly CD checks to include a check that all high strength opiate ampoules no longer required have been removed from non-stock areas or areas not on the restricted issue list.

Review ward stock holding of naloxone preparations

Review ward stock lists to ensure that all wards and departments who order opiates also maintain a stock of naloxone. Where a new area is seeking to order opiates, opiates should not be issued without first confirming that naloxone is available.

Safer practice with opiates

The safer practice notice focuses on a specific area of risk relating to high strength ampoules of diamorphine and morphine. The Medicines Governance Team is conducting a review of regional data on medication incidents involving opiate medicines to identify other areas for action in improving safety with opiates in secondary care in Northern Ireland.

1. Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety; 10 July 2006
HSS(MD)15-2006: *Ensuring safer practice with high dose ampoules of diamorphine and morphine*
2. National Patient Safety Agency; 25 May 2006: Safer practice notice 12:
Ensuring safer practice with high dose ampoules of diamorphine and morphine