

## **NPSA Patient Safety Alert 20, Promoting safer use of injectable medicines**

The NI Regional working group on Alert 20 was established in November 2007. It is a multi-professional group with representation from across each of the Trusts, primary care and NICPPET.

The working group ran a half-day workshop in February 2008 to make healthcare professions aware of the Alert. The workshop was well-attended. Una Lavery, the governance pharmacist from the Leeds Teaching Hospitals' Trust, ran a practical session on how to carry out a risk assessment and shared her learning from the approach taken in Leeds. Their risk assessments were submitted in January 2008.

The recommendations of the working group are as follows:

- 1. Undertake a risk assessment of injectable medicine procedures and products in all clinical areas to identify high risks, and develop an action plan to minimise them.**

Following the training session at the multidisciplinary workshop in February 2008, each Trust's Head of Pharmacy and Medicines Management has been asked to lead an initial risk assessment of injectable medicinal products in all the Trusts' clinical areas and to highlight ways of minimizing high risks.

The NPSA risk assessment questionnaire is available in electronic format and has been circulated to all Trust Pharmacy Managers.

A risk assessment questionnaire has been produced by the primary care group – one for general practice and one for dental practice. GP practices should complete this online if possible by the end of June 2008.

The working group is meeting on 23rd July to review progress with initial risk assessments, identify high risks and discuss associated action plans to minimise them.

- 2. Ensure there are up-to-date protocols and procedures for prescribing, preparing and administering injectable medicines in all clinical areas.**

A sub-group of the Regional working group has been meeting to produce standardised protocols and procedures based on the templates used by the NPSA.

Sub-group members are:

- Ms Angela Diamond
- Mr Ewan McGrattan
- Dr Cormac McLoughlin

- Ms Mary McElroy

**3. Ensure essential technical information on injectable medicines is available and accessible to healthcare staff in clinical areas at the point of use.**

Mrs Eilish Smith and the Northern Ireland Medicines Information Network worked in co-operation and collaboration with the producers of The Hammersmith IV Guide to bring the document back up to date. The Northern Ireland group researched, re wrote sections and updated every monograph. The lengthy and slow process also involved several meetings between Eilish Smith and the Hammersmith Group, to resolve various points that needed further clarification so the guide would reflect practice in Northern Ireland.

Finally the guidance notes at the beginning of the guide were written by Karen Miller and Eilish Smith, incorporating comments contributed by the rest in the team.

The Regional working group recommends that all Trusts should make this book easily accessible at ward level and is exploring the need for the availability of the book in primary care. This will become clear following the initial risk assessment process.

These books have been purchased for use in all Trusts in NI.

**4. Implement a 'purchasing for safety' policy to promote procurement of injectable medicines with inherent safety features.**

A small sub-group of the Regional working group has met to produce a draft NI Regional Purchasing for Safety policy. This draft policy will be brought to the Pharmaceutical Contracting Executive Group for discussion and approval at its next meeting in September 2008.

The sub-group members are:

- Dr Tracey Boyce
- Ms Anne Friel
- Dr Jill Mairs
- Mrs Angela Carrington

**5. Provide training for, and supervision of, all healthcare staff involved in prescribing, administering and monitoring injectable medicines.**

The Regional working group has been discussing the development of distance learning packages for healthcare staff involved in these processes. This could be

made available through the NICPPET website as part of the work being carried out in medicines governance. We understand that there is national work being carried out on such on-line training and would recommend that Northern Ireland is part of the roll-out of this work.

**6. As part of the annual medicines management audit programme, healthcare organisations should include an audit of medication practice with injectable medicines.**

This recommendation is self-explanatory.

**Appendix 1**

**Membership of the Regional working group on NPSA Alert 20**

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