

## COVID-19 Guidance: Minimising Wastage of Critical Injectable Medicines

### Updated advice to healthcare professionals

**Position Statement: 7<sup>th</sup> August 2020**

In April 2020, guidance was provided by the Specialist Pharmacy Service (SPS) to provide advice to health professionals on how to safely protect a supply of injectable medicines to meet the increased demand by minimising wastage over the emergency period relating to Covid-19.

The aim was to minimise the risk of medicine shortages of critical medicines at a time when medicines were in short supply, by taking a risk management approach to the multiple use of vials and ampoules to minimise wastage.

During this period healthcare professionals needed to strike a balance between:

- the risk of failure to treat patients due to running out of medicines in short supply; and
- the risk of sepsis caused by contaminated injectable medicines

***The supply chain for critical injectable medicines has now significantly improved and there is no longer a risk of failure to treat patients due to short supply at the time of writing this update.***

***The risk of sepsis associated with the multiple use of vials can no longer be justified by the need to conserve stocks and therefore this practice should now cease.***

With immediate effect, healthcare professionals are advised to follow the NPSA guidance:

- *NPSA Alert 20: Promoting Safer Use of Injectable Medicines*
- *Patient Safety Alert NHS/PSA/D/2016/008: Restricted use of open systems for injectable medication.*

These alerts identified key principles for the safe preparation & use of injectable medicines and recommended that the administration of injections and infusions prepared in a clinical area should be:

- performed immediately after [ideally within 30minutes of] preparation, and
- completed within a maximum of 24 hours from the time of preparation.

We recommended that Chief Pharmacists immediately review local practice to avoid unnecessary patient safety risks. Should the critical medicines supply chain deteriorate again, this statement will be reviewed and may be revised accordingly.

Practice in pharmacy aseptic units should also revert business-as-usual

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