

SPS Medication Safety Update January 2024

Recent critical patient safety alerts, reports, and publications

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Patient Safety Alerts



- [Shortage of GLP-1 receptor agonists \(GLP-1 RA\) PSA update](#)

This NatPSA supersedes NatPSA/2023/008/DHSC. Supply continues to be limited, with supply not expected to return to normal until at least end of 2024. GLP-1 RAs licensed for type 2 diabetes (T2D) should not be prescribed for off-label uses. Existing stock must be conserved for T2D

Actions:

- Prescribe Rybelsus® tablets for new initiations of a GLP-1 RA (in line with NICE NG28).
- Identify patients prescribed Byetta® and Victoza® injections and (in line with NICE NG28) switch to Rybelsus® tablets.
- Counsel patients on any changes in drug, formulation, and dose regimen where appropriate



Shortage of GLP-1 receptor agonists (GLP-1 RA) update

Date of issue:	3-Jan-24	Reference no:	NatPSA/2024/001/DHSC
This alert is for action by: All organisations involved in prescribing and dispensing GLP1 - RA medicines			
This is a safety critical and complex National Patient Safety Alert. Implementation should be co-ordinated by an executive lead (or equivalent role in organisations without executive boards) and supported by clinical leaders in diabetes, GP practices, pharmacy services in all sectors, weight loss clinics, private healthcare providers and those working in the Health and Justice sector.			



Patient Safety Alerts



- [Transition to NRFit™ connectors for intrathecal and epidural procedures, and delivery of regional blocks \(31st January 2024\)](#)

Actions:

- Prioritise the establishment of a short-life working group (SLWG) to scope out and coordinate the transition to NRFit™ across all relevant clinical specialties
- To ensure comprehensive transition from Luer to NRFit™ devices is managed and supply chain continuity maintained, local procurement leads must:
 - a. Engage with NHS Supply Chain to agree a timeline for transition to NRFit™.
- Identity all device locations and order codes and revise stock management systems



National
Patient
Safety Alert



Association
of Anaesthetists



Transition to NRFit™ connectors for intrathecal and epidural procedures, and delivery of regional blocks

Date of issue:	31 January 2024	Reference no:	NatPSA/2024/002/NHSPS
This alert is for action by: All organisations where intrathecal, epidural or regional block procedures are undertaken.			
This is a safety critical and complex National Patient Safety Alert. Implementation should be co-ordinated by an executive lead (or equivalent role in organisations without executive boards) and supported by clinical leaders in anaesthesia, those involved with intrathecal and epidural procedures and delivery of regional blocks, procurement leads, medical device safety officers and chief pharmacists.			

Recent regulator and statutory body activity



Medicines & Healthcare products
Regulatory Agency

- [MHRA update on new study on risk in children born to men taking valproate](#)
- Results of a study commissioned by the EMA suggest a small increased risk of neurodevelopmental disorders in children fathered by men on valproate in the 3 months prior to conception. The MHRA is analysing the results and will issue any further guidance as soon as possible.
- [Aripiprazole \(Abilify and generic brands\): risk of pathological gambling](#)
- Healthcare professionals prescribing aripiprazole are reminded to be alert to the risk of addictive gambling and other impulse control disorders (e.g excessive eating, spending, or abnormally high sex drive) and should advise patients and their families to be alert to these risks

Recent regulator and statutory body activity



Medicines & Healthcare products
Regulatory Agency

Class 4 Medicines Defect Information

[USV UK Limited, Sugammadex 100 mg/ml solution for injection \(2 ml vial\), EL\(24\)A/02](#)

This notification is a precautionary measure to inform healthcare professionals of the potential for some vials in the specific batch listed to be of lower volume than the label claim of 2 ml, so additional vials may need to be used to supplement the required dosage.

[Quadrant Pharmaceuticals Ltd, Cozaar 100mg film-coated tablets, EL\(24\)A/01](#)

Patient information leaflets (PILs) contained in the affected batches are missing the advice to avoid grapefruit juice while taking Cozaar. Healthcare professionals are advised where possible, to provide an updated PIL.

Pharmacovigilance Risk Assessment Committee (PRAC)



European PRAC starts safety review of CAR T-cell medicines

Secondary malignancies are an important potential risk for CAR T-cell products and included in the Risk Management Plans. The PRAC is reviewing all available evidence, including on 23 cases of T-cell lymphoma or leukaemia, and will decide on the need for any regulatory action.

Potential risk of neurodevelopmental disorders in children born to men treated with valproate medicines: PRAC recommends precautionary measures

The European PRAC is recommending precautionary measures for the treatment of male patients with valproate medicines, to address a potential increased risk of neurodevelopmental disorders in children born to men treated with valproate during the 3 months before conception.

Drug Safety Communication - Update on FDA's ongoing evaluation of reports of suicidal thoughts or actions treated with glucagon-like peptide-1 receptor agonists

The information in reports to the FDA Adverse Event Reporting System was often limited and reviews of clinical trial did not demonstrate a clear relationship. However, it was not possible to rule out a small risk and the FDA is continuing to look into this issue.

Pharmacovigilance Risk Assessment Committee (PRAC)



US FDA looking into reports of alopecia, suicidal ideation and aspiration associated with GLP-1 receptor agonists

The FDA has identified a potential safety issue and is evaluating the need for regulatory action, after the FDA Adverse Event Reporting System (FAERS) received reports of these safety risks in people using these medicines from July to September 2023.

Direct HCP communication

- Valproate (Belvo, Convulex, Depakote, Dyzantil, Epilim, Epilim Chrono or Chronosphere, Episenta, Epival, and Syonell ▼): new safety and educational materials to support regulatory measures in men and women under 55 years of age

New safety and educational materials have been introduced for men and women and healthcare professionals to reduce the harms from valproate, including the significant risk of serious harm to the baby if taken during pregnancy

- Fluoroquinolone antibiotics: must now only be prescribed when other commonly recommended antibiotics are inappropriate

Systemic fluoroquinolones must now only be prescribed when other commonly recommended antibiotics are inappropriate. This follows a review by the MHRA which looked at the effectiveness of current measures to reduce the identified risk of disabling and potentially long-lasting or irreversible side effects.

SPC changes

- [Revised SPCs: Epilim \(sodium valproate\) products](#)

Numerous updates have been made, including changes to reflect implementation of new safety measures to reduce the known harms of valproate, including risk of birth defects and neurodevelopmental disorders following use in pregnancy, and the risk of impaired fertility in males.

- [Revised SPC: Femoston-conti estradiol hemihydrate/dydrogesterone\) Film-coated Tablets - all strengths](#)

SPC now states contraceptives containing oestrogens shown to significantly decrease plasma concentrations of lamotrigine, potentially lowering seizure control, and although interaction between HRT & lamotrigine not been studied, it is expected that similar interaction exists.

- [Revised SPC: Mircera \(methoxy polyethylene glycol-epoetin beta\) solution for injection in pre-filled syringe](#)

Updated with licence extension to cover treatment of symptomatic anaemia linked to chronic kidney disease in paediatric patients from 3 months to <18 years of age who are converting from another erythropoiesis stimulating agent (ESA) after haemoglobin stabilised with previous ESA

- [Revised SPC: Resonium A \(sodium polystyrene sulfonate\)](#)

SPC updated to note that due to the risk of severe gastrointestinal disorders (such as bowel obstruction, ischaemia, necrosis or perforation) the use of polystyrene sulfonate is not recommended in patients with compromised gastrointestinal motility.

- [Revised SPC: Spikevax \(formerly COVID-19 Vaccine Moderna\) XBB.1.5 vaccine](#)

The SPC has been updated to remove the warning about use in immunocompromised individuals (section 4.4), to include safety data in organ transplant recipients (4.8) and to include immunogenicity data in organ transplant recipients (5.2).

SPC changes

- [Revised SPC: Bekemv \(eculizumab\) 300 mg concentrate for solution for infusion](#)

SPC for this biosimilar to Soliris has been updated with licence extension to cover treatment of atypical haemolytic uraemic syndrome. It is already licensed for treating paroxysmal nocturnal haemoglobinuria.

- [Revised SPC: Cetirizine hydrochloride 10mg tablets](#)

SPC updated to note contraindication in patients with end-stage renal disease (GFR < 15 ml/min) and dosing information in renal impairment. Information added to indicate the risk related to use during breast-feeding and myalgia added as an adverse effect of unknown frequency.

- [Revised SPC: Premarin \(oestrogens, conjugated\) coated tablets - all strengths](#)

SPCs now notes the potential interaction of oestrogens with lamotrigine. Although the interaction between HRT and lamotrigine has not specifically been studied, it is expected that an interaction exists, which may lead to a reduction in seizure control.

[Revised SPC: Rivastigmine Dr. Reddys hard capsules – all strengths](#)

Warning added to SPC about risk of electrocardiogram QT prolongation. Caution is advised in patients with pre-existing/family history of QTc prolongation or at higher risk of developing torsade de pointes. ECG monitoring may be required for some people.

[Revised SPC: Shingrix powder and suspension for suspension for injection, Herpes zoster vaccine \(recombinant, adjuvanted\)](#)

SPC updated to note that Shingrix can be given concomitantly with any authorised or approved COVID-19 mRNA vaccine. This is based on data from the ZOSTER-091 study.

Manufacturer RMM

- [Risk Minimisation Materials for eculizumab \(Bekemv\)](#)

Materials include a Physician's Guide, discussing risk of severe infection and sepsis, especially meningococcal infection, signs and symptoms of severe infection, how to minimise this risk (vaccination requirements; antibiotic prophylaxis) and other serious adverse reactions.

- [Risk Minimisation Materials for etranacogene dezaparvovec \(Hemgenix\)](#)

Materials include a healthcare professional guide, which discusses important risks related to this treatment (hepatotoxicity; thromboembolism; malignancy; germline and horizontal transmission; development of factor IX inhibitors) and how to minimise these risks.

- [Risk Minimisation Materials for Litfulo \(ritlecitinib\)](#)

The Prescriber guide provides a checklist for assessments prior to prescribing, management, monitoring and safety considerations related to the Risk Management Plan for ritlecitinib. A Patient Card containing information on important side-effects is also available.

- [Risk Minimisation Materials: Zynlonta \(loncastuximab tesirine\) Patient Card](#)

Card contains important safety information that patients need to be aware of during treatment, including risk of photosensitivity reactions, such as sunburn-like reactions following exposure to light, itchy rash, skin blistering, darker skin patches, irritation, swelling & pain.

Manufacturer RMM

Risk Minimisation Material: Tresiba® (insulin degludec) - Safety information for healthcare professionals regarding two product strengths

- This highlights the pens come as 100units/mL & 200units/mL strengths and potential risk of dosing error. It points out both pens have dose display set in the dial in UNITS so no dose conversion is required if transferring patients between the two strengths.

Risk Minimisation Materials for Casgevy (exagamglogene autotemcel)

Patient/carer guide contains information on the possibility of neutrophil engraftment failure (with associated increased risk of infections) and longer time to platelet engraftment (increased risk of bleeding). A patient alert card and administration guide are also available.

Drug shortages and discontinuations

- Recent medicine shortages and discontinuations are available via: the [SPS Medicines Supply Tool](#) (registration required to access)
- This is not a comprehensive list. Only critical safety medication shortages have been highlighted.

Shortages:

- [Tegretol® \(carbamazepine\) 200mg and 400mg prolonged release tablets](#) – Tegretol immediate release tablets remain available. Curatil 200mg PRTs can only support secondary care
- [Isosorbide mononitrate 40mg modified-release tablets and capsules](#) – anticipated resupply date 02 Feb 2024. Consider alternative 40mg presentation, a 50mg MR tablet if the 40mg MR preparation(s) are not available, a 60mg MR tablet (which can also be halved to provide 30mg doses) if the 40mg MR preparation(s) are not available.
- [Aripiprazole \(Abilify\) 9.75mg/1.3ml solution for injection vials](#)
- [Prednisolone 5mg/5ml oral solution unit dose](#)
- [Raltitrexed \(Tomudex\) 2mg powder for solution for infusion vials](#)
- [Trihexyphenidyl 5mg/5ml oral solution](#)
- [Prilocaine \(Citanest 1%\) 500mg/50ml solution for injection vials](#)
- [Posaconazole \(Noxafil\) 300mg/16.7ml solution for infusion vials](#)

Discontinuation:

- [Diamorphine 500mg powder for solution for injection ampoules](#)

Specialist Pharmacy Service



New resources:

- [Understanding drug interactions](#)
- [Managing interactions with direct oral anticoagulants \(DOACs\)](#)
- [Understanding direct oral anticoagulant \(DOAC\) interactions](#)

Webinars:

- [Safe use of valproate](#)
- [Primary care discussions: progressing as a pharmacy professional](#)

National guidance, publications and resources

- [BNF/BNFC Newsletter: December 2023](#)
- Updates include, among others, MHRA advice on reports of myasthenia gravis with statins, updated guidance for prevention of secondary cases of diphtheria, and updated safety information to highlight difference between benzylpenicillin sodium and benzathine benzylpenicillin.

[Pharmacodynamic effects tables now in digital formats](#)

- Tables used to show additive pharmacodynamic effects of drugs are now available in online BNF, which displays interactions as messages between drug pairs. Tables were used instead for print version due to space constraints, but now added to online version owing to popularity.

Prevention of Future Death Reports (Regulation 28)



Courts and Tribunals Judiciary

[Ref: 2024-0002 - Oxycodone toxicity](#) (8th Jan 2024)

- Coroner's report of death of patient due to oxycodone toxicity enhanced by pregabalin intake noted very prolonged prescribing of these two dependency forming drugs with no evidence to suggest that a discussion had been had or plan put in place by the GP practice to reduce dosages

[Ref: 2024-0012 – Toxicity of multiple drugs](#) (19th Jan 2024)

- Toxicity of Multiple Drugs, including morphine, promethazine, gabapentin and fluoxetine. The patient suffered from chronic back pain for over 15 years and struggled to manage this as well as the addictive effects of the pain medication she was prescribed to alleviate her pain. In the two years leading up to her death, the patient self medicated, using dosages of her medication in excess of the prescription. She was known to hoard her prescription medication. Post mortem examination found that the patient had died from Multiple drug toxicity of prescribed medication. Pregabalin, a medication she was not prescribed at the time was also detected, although not at a fatal concentration.

Prevention of Future Death Reports (Regulation 28)



**Courts and
Tribunals Judiciary**

[Ref: 2023-0544 – Overdose of sleeping tablets and painkillers](#) (29th December 2023)

- The patient had become addicted to sleeping tablets, painkilling medication, and other medications with a sedative effect in the years prior to her death (names of drugs not specified in report / redacted). The patient regularly accessed websites specifically aimed at selling prescription-only medications (predominantly medications with a sedative effect) that allowed repeat orders on the same day and did not require a prescription.

Primary research- Medication Safety

Implementation of pharmacy-led preoperative medication reconciliation in surgical oncology patients.

Journal of the American Pharmacists Association : Date of Publication: 11 Jan 2024.

A standardized preoperative medication reconciliation process was developed and implemented utilising third- and fourth-year pharmacy students. Pre-operative medication reconciliation services can be successfully accomplished through a telephonic pharmacy student and pharmacist-led workflow. Accurate medication histories aid in minimising medication errors and increasing patient safety.

Medication Errors in Paediatric Emergency Departments: A Systematic Review and Recommendations for Enhancing Medication Safety.

Paediatric Emergency Care. 40(1) (pp 58-67). Date of Publication: 01 Jan 2024.

This systematic review provides valuable insights into the complexity of medication errors in the Paediatric-ED, emphasises the need for targeted interventions, and offers recommendations to enhance medication safety and reduce preventable errors in this critical health care setting.

Primary research- Medication Safety

[Medication errors and adverse drug events in peri-operative paediatric anesthetic care over twenty years; a retrospective analysis.](#)

Anesthesia and Analgesia. Conference: 4th National Anaesthesia Research Symposium 2023. Date of Publication: January 2024.

Children are at an increased risk for medication errors (MEs) compared to adult patients. MEs commonly occur during perioperative care. This study aimed to critically look at medication errors, investigate the frequency of adverse drug events and corrective measures taken for these MEs reported over 20 years in paediatric anaesthetic care.

[Medication Safety Event Reporting: Factors That Contribute to Safety Events During Times of Organizational Stress.](#)

Journal of nursing care quality. 39(1) (pp 51-57). Date of Publication: 01 Jan 2024.

Aimed at understanding the insights conveyed in hospital incident reports about how work system factors affected medication safety during a coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19) surge. The study concludes that skill-based errors were the most common contributing factors for medication safety events during a COVID-19 surge. Reporters rarely deemed events to be related to COVID-19, despite the tremendous strain of the surge on nurses. Future efforts to improve the utility of incident reports should emphasise the importance of describing work system factors.

Primary research- Medication Safety

[Ability of machine-learning based clinical decision support system to reduce alert fatigue, wrong-drug errors, and alert users about look alike, sound alike medication.](#)

Computer Methods and Programs in Biomedicine. Article Number: 107869. Date of Publication: January 2024.

This study shows that machine learning based clinical decision support systems (CDSS), has an ability to improve patients' safety by triggering clinically valid alerts. This system can also help improve problem list documentation and intercept inappropriate drug errors and look-alike/sound-alike (LASA) drug errors which can improve medication safety. Moreover, high acceptance of alert rates can help reduce clinician burnout and adverse events.