Dr Jim Livingstone

Director of Safety, Quality and Standards

Dr Norman Morrow

Chief Pharmaceutical Officer

Best Practice Guidance

Subject:

Safer practice with epidural injections and infusions

For action by:

Chief Executive, HSC Board Chief Executive, HSC Trusts Chief Pharmacists, HSC Board/ Trusts

For Info:

Director of Primary Care, HSC Board for cascade to

- Prescribing advisers; and
- GP advisers

Director of Performance Management, HSC Board Assistant Director of Performance Management, HSC Board Chief Executive, Public Health Agency Director of Public Health, Public Health Agency Medical Director NIAS Directors of Nursing, HSC Trusts Chief Executive, RQIA Director, Safety Forum NI Medicines Governance Team Prof. David Woolfson, Head of School of Pharmacy, QUB Prof. Donald Burden, Director of Education, School of Dentistry Prof. Linda Johnston, Head of Nursing & Midwifery, QUB Prof. Hugh McKenna, Head of Life and Health Sciences, UU

Prof. Paul McCarron, Head of School of Pharmacy, UU Chief Executives NIMDTA, NICPPET, NIPEC Regional Medicines Information Service

Dr Owen Barr, Head of School of Nursing, UU

Summary of Contents:

The purpose of this Circular is draw your attention to the templates for epidural prescription, administration and monitoring records.

Enquiries:

Any enquiries about the content of this Circular should be addressed to: Safety & Quality Unit . **DHSSPS** Room D2.4 Castle Buildings Stormont **BELFAST BT4_3SQ**

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety www.dhsspsni.gov.uk

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Circular Reference: HSC (SQSD) 28/07

Addendum 03/09

Date of issue: 13 August 2009

Related documents

HSC (SQSD) 28/07 NPSA Safe Medication Alerts

HSC (SQSD) 28/07 Addendum 01/08

HSC (SQSD) 28/07 Addendum 02/08

Recommendations for implementation in Northern Ireland

Superseded documents

N/A

Status of Contents:

Best Practice Guidance

SQSD material can be accessed on: http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/phealth/sqs.htm

Working for a Healthier People

Chief Medical Officer Group



Dear colleagues

National Patient Safety Agency (NPSA) Alert 21 – Safer practice with epidural injections and infusions

In August 2008 the Department issued Addendum 2/08 to Circular HSC (SQSD) 28/2007 relating to safer practice with epidural injections and infusions which included the Regional Working Group's recommendations for implementation in Northern Ireland.

At that time, the Regional Working Group identified that a number of different documents were being used across Northern Ireland for the prescription, administration and monitoring of epidurals. As a result, a Regional Epidural Subgroup was convened to develop template documents to promote greater consistency in the documentation used by HSC Trusts. The Terms of Reference of the Group is attached at **Appendix 1**.

This work has now been completed and compliments the Regional Working Group's recommendations. It is anticipated that this will be of use to Trusts when developing their epidural charts. The templates and associated notes are attached at **Appendix 2**.

You will wish to bring the contents of this document and all related documents to the attention of staff, particularly those involved in governance and risk management within your organisation who need to be aware of this and similar alerts in order to assist in complying with the *Quality Standards for Health & Social Care* –

- Criterion 5.3.1(f)(viii) and (ix) (ensuring safe practice and appropriate management of risk); and
- Criterion 5.3.3(f) (implementation of evidence-based practice through guidance, for example, NPSA guidance).

Finally, may we take this opportunity to acknowledge all the work that has been done to date in improving medication safety across Northern Ireland including this latest contribution by the Regional Epidural Sub-group.

Yours sincerely

DR J F Livingstone

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Safety, Quality and Standards Directorate

Dr Norman C Morrow

Chief Pharmaceutical Officer

Regional Epidural Sub-group

Terms of reference

Group members

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Remit

- To review all available documents currently used for prescription, administration and monitoring of epidural infusions in each Trust.
- To identify key elements that must be included in documents for prescription, administration and monitoring of epidural infusions.
- To develop a template document for prescription, administration and monitoring of epidural infusions.

Templates for epidural prescription, administration and monitoring records

Option 1: Pre-printed stickers for prescription and administration record of new infusion bag – for attachment to regional Kardex template

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Option 2: Prescription and administration record of new infusion bag – for printing on reverse of epidural MEWS/PEWS chart

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Monitoring and administration record of continuous infusion – <u>for incorporation into MEWS/PEWS</u> <u>chart</u>

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Notes on templates

Two options are given for the prescription and administration record of a new infusion bag. Both options facilitate a consistent approach to prescription while accommodating differences in documentation, for example, not all Trusts have a separate epidural MEWS/PEWS chart while other Trusts do not use adhesive labels.

Option 1: The template is designed for use with the regional kardex template. Some minor adjustments in size may be necessary to fit the spacing on the kardex in use in individual Trusts. DHSSPS Pharmaceutical Inspectorate have advised that Use and Control of Medicines (April 2004), which recommends that pre-printed adhesive labels are not acceptable for a prescription, has now been superseded by an update to the Misuse of Drugs Regulations (2007). The regulations allow for pre-printed adhesive stickers to be used for a prescription provided that the signature is 'oversigned', that is the signature must be written in such a way as to cover both the sticker and the kardex. The stickers have been designed to accommodate this. A sticker has been produced for each of the pre-prepared epidural infusions included in the recommendations of the Regional Working Group.

Option 2: The template is designed for printing on the reverse of an epidural MEWS/PEWS chart where this is in use and requires prescription details to be handwritten in accordance with Use and Control of Medicines. Where only one local anaesthetic is in use, the local anaesthetic may be pre-printed as part of the prescription. The template allows for one prescription change. The prescription must be referenced on the medicine kardex according to Trust policy. Training in use of the prescription should incorporate guidance that where no opioid is included in the prescription, a line should be drawn through that part of the prescription or 'None' written to prevent addition after the prescription has been written. Where ropivacaine is prescribed, a line should be drawn through sodium chloride.

Epidural catheter site, length of catheter in epidural space, distance from skin to epidural space and initial dose of local anaesthetic +/- opioid are currently recorded on the anaesthetic record and this should continue.

The monitoring and administration record of continuous infusion is designed for incorporation into a MEWS/PEWS observation chart as a template of what should be recorded for monitoring in addition to standard observations.