



Western Health
and Social Care Trust

The Altnagelvin Doctors' Handbook



AUGUST, 2008.

Prescribing:

Prescribing medication is one of the most important duties as a junior doctor, and mistakes in this area can be detrimental for the patient, and lay you open to litigation. The following general guidelines may help, but remember to ask a senior colleague, your ward pharmacist or medicines information (extension 3262) and consult the British National Formulary (BNF) if you are in doubt.

Accurate and safe prescribing

Your prescriptions must be accurate and legible. You should read and put into practice the advice given in the BNF 'General Guidelines'. In general: -

- 1) Write **legibly** and avoid abbreviations. Full signatures are required, not initials.
- 2) Prescribe generically, except for proprietary combinations, sustained release formulations or where the bioavailability of medicines differs between brands (e.g. lithium, theophyllines). You should receive a copy of the generics medicine policy/poster as part of your induction pack.
- 3) Avoid unnecessary use of decimal points e.g. 3mg (not 3.0mg). Quantities of less than 1 gram should be written in milligrams e.g. 500mg (not 0.5mg). Quantities less than 1 milligram should be written in micrograms e.g. 100 micrograms (not 0.1mg). —
- 4) Microgram, units and nanograms should be written in full to avoid confusion.
- 5) Check drug doses, dose intervals and route with great care.
- 6) Check for drug sensitivities; record clearly in the allergy box.
- 7) When re-writing a kardex, use the date when the prescription was **first initiated**. Cancel the prescriptions on the old sheet, using a single straight line through each entry, dated and initialled.
- 8) When a patient is admitted, take care to obtain details of their previous prescription and continue drugs at the appropriate dosage where necessary.
- 9) When initiating a new drug you have little experience with, ask a senior colleague before making a major change in therapy. You may also wish to ask the advice of your ward pharmacist/medicines information who can research the literature on side effects and interactions of new or less commonly used drugs. Always record the reasons for initiating therapy in the medical notes and inform the nursing staff. Inform the General Practitioner of these indications and of how long you intend the patient to take the medication. The patient should also be fully informed about their medication, and where the drug is particularly toxic, unlicensed or being used for an unlicensed use you should provide specific patient information and record that you have done so.
- 10) Take particular care with **calculations** of drug dosage (by age, height or weight). You must record clearly the patient's height and weight and the calculation you have performed to arrive at the dose. When you find yourself giving more than three parenteral dosage units (i.e. three ampoules or vials), check first with the Pharmacy department.

- 11) Certain parenteral and other products are made up in the aseptic department of pharmacy and supplied to the ward ready for administration to the patient. These include antimicrobial infusions, total parenteral nutrition, eye injections and eye-drops. Order forms/prescriptions are available on wards. These should be completed and sent to pharmacy before noon each day. For further advice and information contact ext 3261.

Allergy status

Obtain the allergy status as soon as possible following admission and document the medicine (generic name)/allergen, type of reaction, date and signature. If a patient has 'no known allergy' tick the box, sign and date the red allergy box on the front of the kardex. Medicines must not be prescribed (unless in an emergency) if the allergy box is not complete. Always check the allergy status prior to prescribing a new medicine.

Adverse Drug Reactions - Yellow Cards

If you suspect that an adverse reaction may be related to a drug or combination of drugs, you should complete the yellow card (see at back of BNF) or complete a report on the website at www.yellowcard.gov.uk For intensively monitored medicines (identified by ▼) report all suspected reactions (including any considered not to be serious). For established drugs and herbal remedies report **all serious** adverse reactions in adults; report all serious and minor adverse reactions in children (under 18 years).

Antibiotic Guidelines:

A hospital antimicrobial guideline is available on the hospital's intranet. These guidelines are based on good practice and revised frequently, so you should use them as often as possible. Advice on the management of infections can be obtained from the Consultant Microbiologist.

Medication on Discharge:

Take care to ensure that your prescription is accurate and legible, and that the patient is given instruction on any new treatments. 28 days supply is given unless otherwise indicated. Please record details of duration of antibiotics and electrolyte replacement therapies, reducing dose of steroids and affected eye(s) for eye drops. Only five days supply of benzodiazepines, zopiclone or zolpidem will be supplied. Do not prescribe night sedation that was intended for hospital stay only.

Anti-Coagulation:

If your patient has been commenced on anti-coagulants, you **must** fill out the anticoagulant referral form and follow the instructions according to how the patient is to be followed up

hospital anticoagulant clinic or GP). The form should include the diagnosis, the target INR, and the proposed duration of anti-coagulation. Patients should be informed verbally and in writing of the nature, adverse effects and potential interactions of their therapy. An information leaflet is available, and this must be given to the patient prior to discharge from hospital.

For all patients one box of Warfarin 1mg and Warfarin 3mg will be supplied on discharge.

Pharmacy Intranet site

To access this site click on the 'Medicines' icon on the main WHSCT Trust intranet page. This site will give you access to:

- Medicines Code
- Medicines Policies, Guidelines e.g. antibiotic & formularies
- Medicines information reference sites
- Recent publications from DoH, NICE, NPSA

Pharmacy Opening Times

Monday to Friday: 8.30am to 5.00 pm

Saturday: 9am to 1200 Noon

Outside of these hours an **oncall service** is available. Please contact the night manager to access this service.

Pharmacy contact numbers

Dispensary (Alt)

Aseptics (Alt)

Medicines Information (Alt)

