



# Controlled Drugs Newsletter

This newsletter contains local and national CD information to support safe use and handling of controlled drugs

Issue No. 23

Month /Year: Mar/23

## **Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) Drug safety update - Topical testosterone (Testogel): risk of harm to children following accidental exposure**

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On 25 January 2023, MHRA published a drug safety update on topical testosterone (Testogel).

Premature puberty and genital enlargement have been reported in children who were in close physical contact with an adult using topical testosterone and who were repeatedly accidentally exposed to this medicine. To reduce these risks, advise patients to wash their hands after application of topical testosterone, cover the application site with clothing once the product has dried, and wash the application site before physical contact with another adult or child.

For further information: [Topical testosterone \(Testogel\): risk of harm to children following accidental exposure - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

## **Reminder - all schedules need reporting**

This is to remind everyone that any and all incidents which involve controlled drugs, including those from lower schedules (4 & 5) like benzodiazepines and z-drugs, must be reported to the NHS England regional CDAO via CD Reporting: [cdreporting.co.uk](https://cdreporting.co.uk). (The exception to this rule is if you are reporting from an organisation with its own CDAO, a CQC-registered CD 'designated body').

**Useful Websites****CD Reporting**[www.cdreporting.co.uk](http://www.cdreporting.co.uk)**Home Office**<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/home-office>**Department of Health**<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-health>**General  
Pharmaceutical  
Council**[www.pharmacyregulation.org](http://www.pharmacyregulation.org)**Care Quality  
Commission**<http://www.cqc.org.uk/>**NHS Prescription  
Services CD section**<https://www.nhs.uk/pharmacies-gp-practices-and-appliance-contractors/prescribing-and-dispensing/safer-management>**Pharmaceutical  
Services Negotiating  
Committee**<http://psnc.org.uk/dispensing-supply/>**Case study – ensuring the safe prescribing of Controlled Drugs**

An initial investigation was carried out which highlighted multiple prescriptions for tramadol prescribed for a single patient being sent to various pharmacies, all issued by the same nurse prescriber.

The initial concern was raised by a community pharmacy who noted the large quantity of tramadol prescribed. Further investigation found that 3 to 4 prescriptions were being issued per week and being sent to various pharmacies, however there was no record of the patient requesting prescriptions on the patient's record. During the investigation, the nurse prescriber admitted issuing extra prescriptions to the patient via requests to their personal mobile phone, including at weekends and when they were off sick/on annual leave. The nurse's reasoning for issuing the tramadol was that they "felt sorry" for the patient and admitted that they had become too friendly with them.

**Key issues**

- Patient was being over prescribed tramadol and prescriber failed to recognise the severity of this
- Taking medication requests via personal mobile phone, including when on annual leave/off sick/weekends
- Lack of documentation of the tramadol prescribing on the patients record
- No consultations or review with the GP regarding the high quantity/dose of tramadol
- Sending electronic prescriptions to multiple pharmacies on a rotational basis

**Learnings & Actions**

- It is important for GP practices to ensure they are carrying out regular opioid and other controlled drugs prescribing audits
- High opioid users should be flagged for review to the GP partners
- Community pharmacies should raise concerns to GP practices when they feel a patient is being overprescribed controlled drugs
- The nurse prescriber has been reported to the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) and has been put under an interim suspension order for 18 months
- Police investigation underway and the nurse prescriber is going through an employer disciplinary process
- Surgery has informed all the clinical staff and the patient is now under GP review for a monitored reduction programme

## **Case study – deception by impersonating a doctor**

An individual impersonating a registered doctor who shared the same name had been attempting to obtain controlled drugs (CDs) from community pharmacies. This person approached pharmacies often citing that there had been a complaint of unlabelled or out of date medication given out to a patient, and therefore they needed to undertake a compliance check.

This person used the same doctor's details, including their full name, GMC number, and presented ID which matched a particular registered professional.

Pharmacies reported that this person was calm and confidently used terminology which only healthcare professionals would understand.

These factors gave pharmacy staff a false sense of assurance that this was a genuine healthcare professional.

## **Learnings**

### **Alerts**

- Regularly check the Pharmacy NHS mail account for alerts and share key information with the pharmacy team

### **Vigilance**

- Consider the appropriateness of the questions being asked by an external visitor
- Do not leave CDs unattended with anyone who is not directly employed by your organisation
- If any information is shared with an impersonator, consider changing your processes which could result in theft or fraudulent activity as a result of having shared that information

### **ID checks**

- Be vigilant with unknown healthcare professionals and always ask to check their official organisational identification
- Ensure all external visitor's sign in and out of your organisational visitors' book

### **Reporting**

- Immediately report any suspicious activity to the police and your regional CDAO team via CD reporting

## **Reminder to community pharmacies and care homes: check expiries of exemption certificates issued by the police**

If you have had an exemption certificate issued by the police to say they are satisfied that the safes, cabinets, cases or rooms in which controlled drugs are being kept provide an adequate degree of security, please ensure they are still valid as they expire one year after issue. There are no charges associated with obtaining an exemption certificate.

Please contact your local CDLO for further information [apcdlo.org](http://apcdlo.org) [controlled drugs liaison officers](#)

[The Misuse of Drugs \(Safe Custody\) Regulations 1973 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

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- **For Information**
  - **Published 02 March 2023 by NHSE:** [NHS England » Optimising personalised care for adults prescribed medicines associated with dependence or withdrawal symptoms: Framework for action for integrated care boards \(ICBs\) and primary care](#)
  - **Health Education England (HEE) are pleased to announce new, fully funded, NHS clinical examination skills training for community pharmacists.** This new offer will build on community pharmacists' existing clinical examination and consultation skills – to assess, treat and manage common health problems. 10,000 module places will be available until March 2024. To register and find out more about the training visit the [CliniSkills website](#).
  - **SPS (Specialist Pharmacy Service) publications January 2023:**
    - [Using codeine, dihydrocodeine or tramadol during breastfeeding – SPS - Specialist Pharmacy Service – The first stop for professional medicines advice](#)
    - [Switching between gabapentin and pregabalin for neuropathic pain – SPS - Specialist Pharmacy Service – The first stop for professional medicines advice](#)

## ***How to contact the East of England Controlled Drugs Team***

East of England CD team primary contact is [england.ea-cdao@nhs.net](mailto:england.ea-cdao@nhs.net)

This inbox is continuously monitored. If you need to speak to someone urgently, please email us requesting a call back with your phone number included.

To report a CD incident or concern, or request an Authorised Witness please go to:  
[www.cdreporting.co.uk](http://www.cdreporting.co.uk)