Category: Medication

Preventing: Methotrexate – Trimethoprim/co-trimoxazole interactions

Key words: Methotrexate, Trimethoprim, Co-trimoxazole, Drug Interactions, Severe Side Effects

Sharing Learning Points

LOCALLY

Sept 25

What happened?

Learning points were shared in July 2021 following incidents where patients were co-prescribed methotrexate and trimethoprim.

There has been a recent increase in adverse events reports in both Primary and Secondary care where patients taking methotrexate have also been prescribed either trimethoprim or co-trimoxazole.

There is a risk of nephrotoxicity and haematological toxicity when co-prescribing methotrexate and trimethoprim or co-trimoxazole and as such should be avoided.

Electronic prescribing systems in Primary and Secondary care will not prevent the prescriber from prescribing medicines with interactions, however, Hospital Electronic Prescribing and Medicines Administration (HEPMA) does trigger a "conflict log".

No harm is known to have been caused to the patients involved in the recent events but it has highlighted the need to regularly raise awareness of the risks.

What went well?

Adverse Events reports triggered the identification of a theme and highlighted the need to re-share the risks associated with co-prescribing methotrexate and trimethoprim or co-trimoxazole.

Shared Care Arrangement for Methotrexate (Adults) clearly highlights co-trimoxazole/trimethoprim as a contra-indication.

What, if anything, could we improve?

Awareness of the risks with co-prescribing methotrexate and trimethoprim or co-trimoxazole.

Checking for interactions at the point of prescribing.

What have we learnt?

- Co-prescribing Methotrexate and Trimethoprim or co-trimoxazole should be avoided.
- Awareness of the risks of co-prescribing methotrexate and trimethoprim or co-trimoxazole need to be shared regularly.
- Potential interactions should be checked at the point of prescribing.
- Reporting adverse events can trigger themes occurring in both Primary and Secondary Care.

If you have any comments about this or any similar adverse event please send them to lindsay.cameron2@nhs.scot NHS Grampian Medication Safety Advisor