Standards for side effect monitoring

What you can expect

All medicines can cause unwanted side-effects. It is our responsibility to monitor your response to medication and any negative effects. We have developed standards so you know what to expect from our service.
Introduction
Whenever you are prescribed medicines, a fundamental part of our role as health professionals is to monitor your response, as well as the side effects you may experience.

Audits, service user surveys and outcomes of incidents have demonstrated the need for us to improve.

And so, not only have the trust’s drugs and therapeutics committee produced overall guidance for the monitoring and management of side effects, we have also developed standards which tell you what you can expect from our service.

Side effect monitoring standards

1. Information

Standard
As a service user I can expect to be provided with information to help me to recognise if my medication is having the right effect and what any side-effects from the medication might be.

What we will do:

• Talk to you about effects and the possible side-effects of the medication you are prescribed.

• Provide you with written information about effects and the possible side-effects of the medication you are prescribed.

• With your agreement, we will also provide information to family members or carers.
• For some medicines, e.g. lithium and warfarin, you should be provided with a monitoring book. These should be taken to all appointments with healthcare professionals to help monitor your physical health. They should also be shown to your pharmacist when buying medicines.

2. Responsibility for side effect monitoring

Standard
As a service user I can expect the effects and side-effects of the medication I am prescribed to be managed and monitored regularly by members of the clinical team.

What we will do:

• Develop a care plan with you to ensure safe and effective use of medication and monitoring of side-effects.
• Advise you to take up the offer of physical examinations and blood tests so that we can make sure the medication is not causing you any problems.
• Ask you if you are experiencing any problems with your medication.
• Listen and take action if you tell us you are experiencing problems with your medication. You are most likely to experience side-effects when medication is started or the dose is increased.
• Help you to complete side-effect rating scales, where these are available, at times agreed within your care plan.
• Record in your notes any discussions held with you about your medication.
• Ensure medicine doses are not increased or decreased too quickly as this may increase side effects.
3. Monitoring physical health

Standard
As a service user I can expect my physical health to be monitored, particularly whilst I am receiving medication.

What we will do:

• If you are admitted to hospital you will be offered a physical health care check on admission. This will include a physical examination and assessment of side effects. If you remain in hospital this will be repeated when necessary and at least every six months.

• Offer you a blood test to enable us to monitor for adverse effects of your medication. Certain medicines will require more frequent blood tests. If you are out of hospital your trust doctor will continue to monitor response to medication including side effects. Primary responsibility for your physical health care will be passed to your GP with advice from the trust on appropriate monitoring.

4. Pharmacy support

Standard
As a service user I can expect to be provided with support from the pharmacy team.

What we will do:

• If you are admitted you can request for a pharmacist to meet with you to discuss any questions you have about your medication.
The pharmacist will provide expert advice to your doctor or nurse about all aspects of your medicines including the management of side-effects.

**How you can help us monitor your response to and side effects of medication.**

You will be given information about your medication, including side effects, so that you are able to recognise if your medication is having the right effect.

Let a member of staff know immediately if you are experiencing problems with your medication.

You are most likely to experience side effects when a medication is started or the dose is increased.

We advise you to take up the offer of physical examinations and blood tests, so that we can make sure the medication is not causing you any problems.

**The trust’s responsibility for side effect monitoring for inpatients**

Your medical team will offer you a physical health care check, including blood tests and physical examination, on admission and at regular intervals.

Your prescriber will discuss positive effects and potential side effects with you when prescribing a new medication.

You will be given leaflets about your current medication and have the opportunity to discuss these with a healthcare professional.
Your team will develop a care plan with you to ensure safe and effective use of medication and monitoring of side effects.

Your primary nurse will help you to complete side effect rating scales (where these are available) at times agreed within your care plan.

We will ensure appropriate physical monitoring (e.g. blood pressure, pulse, weight and temperature) is performed when indicated for example when stating new medicines.

Members of your care team will regularly ask you if you are currently problems with your medication and agree a plan with you to manage these.

The trust’s responsibility for side effect monitoring for community patients

When you attend an outpatient appointment you will be asked if your medication is helping you and whether you are currently experiencing any problems with your medication and agree a plan with you to manage these.

Pharmacy support for side effect monitoring

The trust pharmacist is available to meet with you whilst you are an inpatient should you request this through your primary nurse.

The pharmacist will provide expert advice to your doctor or nurse about all aspects of your medicines including the management of side-effects.

Community pharmacists can provide information about your medicines as well as checking that medicines you buy can be used with your current treatments.
All healthcare professionals are responsible for:

Recording information in your notes about discussions with you about your medication.

Giving out information, whether side effects are present or not, and discussing with you the most common and important side effects for each medication.

**Evidence**

Assessment of side effects must be documented on the physical examination page of your electronic record (RiO).

Staff at Broadmoor Hospital are required to update their physical health form to include requirements. The following must be documented as minimum:

- Evidence of side effect monitoring
- General statement regarding side effects
- Whether side effect rating scale used if available
- Physical examination to assess side effects undertaken
- Blood tests related to side effects and documentation of results
- Extrapyramidal side effects (EPS) assessment
- Weight assessment
- Sexual side effects assessment.
More information

If you need more information about anything contained within this booklet, please ask your doctor, care coordinator or pharmacist.

You can also find detailed, but easy-to-digest, information about all kinds of medication encountered in mental health on the ‘choice and medication’ website:

www.choiceandmedication.org/wlmht

Feedback

We appreciate and encourage feedback. If you need advice or are concerned about any aspect of care or treatment, please speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (PALS):

Freephone: 0800 064 3330
Email: pals@wlmht.nhs.uk
Post: PALS, West London Mental Health NHS Trust, Trust Headquarters, 1 Armstrong Way, Southall, UB2 4SA

Alternative formats

This information can be provided in different languages and formats. For more information, contact:

Communications team
Tel: 020 8354 8737
Email: communications@wlmht.nhs.uk

This leaflet was developed by the medicines management group.

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