



Practice sting 2021-22

Practice sting Suicide risk and dispensing larger quantities

Due to the professional secrecy of the practitioner and privacy regulations, patients with a suicide risk are not always known to the pharmacy team. If they are known, there are points that must be taken into account, as the following notification shows.

Notification

A depressive patient exhibits suicidal behavior. Because of the risk of abuse of the medication, the GP, in consultation with the patient, has decided to start a repeat service (HHS) with monthly deliveries. The pharmacy team is aware of the patient's background, but for privacy reasons nothing is recorded in the patient's file. The HHS started at the beginning of summer. The patient submitted the stock of medicine to the pharmacy and the repeat service started. To avoid the December crowds in the pharmacy, the pharmacist prepared in advance extra deliveries for the HHS patients. The depressive patient received the December delivery at the end of November. So the opportunity arose for the patient to attempt suicide.

Analysis

When the HHS started, the pharmacist decided not to record in the patient's file for privacy reasons that patient is known to exhibit suicidal behavior. The pharmacist should have recorded this information. A pharmacist is allowed to record information of this kind when hearing directly from the patient or when the patient gave permission to the GP to share this information with the pharmacist. It is also important that the pharmacist realizes that the patient has the right to inspect her pharmacy file. With a busy period ahead in the pharmacy - such as the holidays and approaching holiday periods - some pharmacists decide to work ahead, for example by dispensing larger quantities to HHS patients. It is recommended to take a critical look at which patients are and are not eligible for the supply of larger amounts of (risk) medication.

Recommendations

For pharmacists

- Record in the file of patients that a patient has an increased suicide risk – after having obtained consent from the patient or from the practitioner to whom the patient has given consent to give this information to the pharmacist.
- Never deliver more than the agreed amount to patients with known suicidal behavior. This also applies to other groups of patients where the delivery of large amounts of drugs can cause problems, such as patients with memory problems.
- When working in advance with an HHS, be critical of the type and amount of medication that is placed in the delivery cabinet.