



Practice sting 2023-04

Practice sting Medication changes in patients with dementia

This Practical Incentive is particularly interesting for pharmacists and general practitioners

Most patients with dementia use medication. This medication is often supplied in a medicine roll, with the patient receiving help from a caregiver or home care worker. Sometimes a medicine dispenser is used that dispenses the medicines at the right time. The following notification shows that the delivery and use of medication in these patients do not always go right.

Notifications

An alone living woman uses galantamine capsules 8 mg against dementia of the Alzheimer's type. She takes her medicines, including galantamine, from the medicine roll independently. In the hospital, the geriatrician increases the dose of galantamine to 16 mg and sends a prescription to the pharmacy. A month later, the geriatrician increases the dosage to 24 mg and sends another prescription to the pharmacy. On both prescriptions, the geriatrician requests that galantamine be included in the medicine roll. However, only the second prescription with the dose increase to 24 mg reaches the pharmacy. In addition to the galantamine 8 mg in the medicine roll, the pharmacy supplies a box of galantamine 16 mg capsules separately to bridge the period until the next delivery of a new medicine roll. The woman's daughter notices that her mother is confused by the separately delivered box of capsules and no longer understands how to take her medicines. The daughter also notes that the prescribed dose increase to 16 mg has not taken place.

Analysis

The dose of galantamine should be increased according to a titration schedule. In the above report, several things went wrong with the galantamine dose increase:

1. The prescription of galantamine 16 mg does not reach the pharmacy.
2. In the pharmacy people do not notice that a deviation of the titration schedule occurs when the dose of galantamine is increased to 24 mg.
3. Despite her dementia, the woman receives a box of galantamine capsules in addition to her medicine roll.

This practice sting addresses the third point, the use of medicines by people with dementia. The notification shows that patients with dementia require special attention. The physician and pharmacist must know what these patients can and cannot do independently. Can a patient with dementia independently take medication from a medication roll? If so, can the patient take separately medicines in addition to a medicine roll? For people with dementia, it is necessary for the pharmacist and the physician to be able to answer these questions. They must be aware of what their patients can still do themselves and how the management and use of medicines by and for the patient is organized. This way they can determine whether it is desirable to call in home care.

Recommendations

For general practitioners

- In the pharmacotherapy consultation group, make agreements with the pharmacist about dementia and medication use.
- Inform the pharmacist if the patient has (early) dementia.
- Check whether the patient is able to independently take medication safely from a medication roll or with the aid of a medication dispenser. If not, is a caregiver available to help with the medication or is home care needed?
- Note in the patient file how the support for the use of medication is organized for the patient with dementia and inform the pharmacist about this.

For pharmacists

- In the pharmacotherapy consultation group, make agreements with the GPs about dementia and medication use.
- Always note in the patient file if the patient has dementia.
- Note in the patient file how the support for the use of medication is organized by the patient with dementia.
- Talk to the patient with dementia and his or her caretaker if you notice that the patient is having problems with the use of the medication. Common signals are: the patient does not pick up his or her medication (on time), says he or she still has a lot in stock when picking up medication, or comes in the pharmacy several times for the same medication. Look with the patient for a solution. If necessary, contact the GP of the patient.
- Start a new dose of galantamine when the patient with dementia starts using the new drug roll or adjust the drug roll in the meantime. Call in informal care or home care if it is not possible to put the medication - for example drinks - in a medicine roll.