



Practice sting 2023-07

Practice sting Traveling with medicines

This Practical Incentive is particularly interesting for pharmacists and prescribers

A patient cannot just take all the medicines abroad. A special statement is required for certain medicines.

Notification

A lady uses methylphenidate as a treatment for ADHD and zolpidem for sleeping problems. She is going on a holiday to Sweden by plane and has the medication in a resealable, clear plastic bag in her hand luggage. On arrival in Sweden, she takes the medication out of the luggage, which the customs authorities notice. The lady is not allowed to leave the airport of Sweden with her medication, because she does not have the relevant Schengen statement with her. She is forced to travel back to the Netherlands.

Analysis

When traveling to countries in the Schengen area, a so-called Schengen statement is always required if the patient takes an Opium Act medicine with him. In addition to opioids and cannabis, the Opium Act medicines also include sleeping pills, tranquilizers and ADHD medicines. Some of the patients will not realize that it is a criminal offense to go abroad with medicines that fall under the Opium Act without a valid statement. The package insert does not provide any information about this. A Schengen declaration applies to one medicine. For example, if a patient uses lorazepam and diazepam, two Schengen declarations are required. A Schengen declaration is not sufficient for traveling to a country outside the Schengen area. Often a different medication statement is required.

Medicines that do not fall under the Opium Act may not be taken to all countries. For example, it is forbidden to bring nicotine gum into Singapore. If a patient uses nicotine gum, the patient must purchase it from a pharmacy in Singapore.

Patients should map out the steps they need to take when they travel and want to take medicines with them. For example, whether a medication declaration is required. And if so, what requirements it must meet. It is important that travel organizations and healthcare professionals inform patients about applying for the correct medication declaration when traveling abroad and refer them to travel assistance.

Contrary to what some patients think, a medicine passport is not a valid medicine declaration. It is only a useful medication overview when care has to be provided abroad.

Recommendations

For prescribers

- Inform patients – who use Opium Act medicines and go abroad – that they must apply for a medicine declaration. As a prescriber, sign this medication declaration. Refer patients to the Medicines on travel assistance.

For pharmacists

- When Opium Act medicines are first issued, inform patients about the medicine declaration that is required when traveling abroad. Refer to the Medicines on travel assistance. Repeat this information periodically.