Practice sting Wrong medicine selected

This Practice sting was created in collaboration with the Pharmacy Game of the Master Pharmacy in Leiden.

The Practice sting is particularly interesting for prescribers, pharmacists and pharmacy assistants

An error that can easily occur during prescription processing in the pharmacy is selecting the wrong medicine. The following notification is a good example of this.

Notification

A physician prescribes Modalim (ciprofibrate) 100 mg tablets to a patient with hypertriglyceridemia and sends the prescription electronically to the pharmacy. The Pharmacy Information System (AIS) does not recognize the prescribed product. The pharmacy assistant must process the prescription manually. The assistant types in the MEMO code 'modat1' and then selects modafinil 100 mg tablets. A medicine with an indication for narcolepsy. Another pharmacy assistant takes the modafinil tablets and does not notice the error. The pharmacist who checks the prescriptions also does not notice the error. The patient collects the medication. The patient hesitates for a long time whether he wants to use the medicine. The patient starts taking it after a few months. After taking a few tablets, the patient experiences side effects. The patient stops taking the medicine. After a year, the patient visits the physician for a check-up. The physician discovers the error.

Analysis

In this notification, something may have gone wrong during the prescription and an error was made by the pharmacy assistant. Moreover, the error of the first pharmacy assistant was not noticed by the second pharmacy assistant and the pharmacist.

The prescriber. Due to the method of prescription, Modalim could not be automatically entered into the AIS. A possible cause is that the prescriber does not select the medicine from the medicine file in the prescribing system, but states the name of the medicine in the free text field. Another reason may be that the medicine file in the prescription system is not up to date. This will not have played a role in this notification: Modalim has been in the medicine database since 1998.
The pharmacy. The pharmacy assistant had to process the prescription manually. With manual prescription processing, the pharmacy assistant - just as the prescriber should do when prescribing - types in the first letters of the name of the desired medicine. This is the MEMO code. To select the correct dosage form and strength, the pharmacy assistant can add additional letters and numbers. The pharmacy assistant then selects the correct medicine from the medicine list in the desired dosage form and strength. It went wrong with selecting the right medicine. Modalim tablets 100 mg and modafinil tablets 100 mg both appear after typing the MEMO code 'modat1'. Subsequently, the second pharmacy assistant and the pharmacist did not notice the error.

Recommendations
For prescribers
- Select the medicine to be prescribed using the MEMO code from the medicine file in your prescription system.
- Make sure your prescription system's medicine file is up to date. (For prescribers in hospitals and care institutions, this task will not lie with the prescriber but with, for example, the IT department)

- Always check whether you have prescribed the correct medicine before sending the prescription to the pharmacy.

For pharmacists and pharmacy assistants
- When manually processing prescriptions, pay close attention to whether the correct medicine has been selected.
- Discuss with the pharmacy team that attention is paid to the indication during prescription processing. Use the following sources for this:
  o For a limited number of medicines, the prescriber must state the indication on the prescription. This obligation does not apply to either Modalim (ciprofibrate) or modafinil.
  o Does the type of prescriber match the prescribed medicine? You expect prescriptions from cardiologists for medicines for cardiovascular diseases, but not prescriptions for the indication of narcolepsy.
  o Use the first issue talk. Start this conversation with the questions: what has the physician already told you about the medicine? What is the reason for the medication (indication)? Does the reason given by the patient fit the indication of the selected medicine?

  If in doubt, always contact the prescriber.