



Practice sting 2025-01

Practice sting Medicines in strip packaging in the medicine roll

This Practice sting is particularly interesting for public pharmacists, hospital pharmacists and healthcare professionals who administer medicines

Many medicines are packaged in strip packaging. Accidentally taking a medicine with strip packaging can have serious consequences for the esophageal and intestinal wall. VMI recently received such a notification.

Notification

A patient, admitted to a hospital, receives his medication bag from the nurse with the medication he has to take. He removes the medication from the bag and takes the medication without interference of a nurse. The medication bag contains, among other things, a 0.5 mg colchicine tablet that is still packed in its blister. The medication bag states in small letters that the colchicine tablet is still in its blister. The nurse did not see this and did not tell the patient that he had to push the colchicine tablet out of the blister. The patient also did not notice this and took the colchicine tablet in its blister. After some time after taking the tablet, the patient complains of swallowing problems and pain in the throat and esophagus. He also reports that taking the colchicine tablet was difficult. This makes the connection with taking the colchicine tablet in its blister possible. The further course of events is unknown at VMI.

Analysis

Processing or filling colchicine has health risks. To reduce this risk, colchicine tablets in strip packaging can be packaged in a medicine roll. It is desirable that the healthcare professional who provides or administers medicines is aware of these health risks and the possible presence of the strip packaging. It is particularly important for the patient to know that a tablet in the strip packaging is packaged in the medicine roll. Therefore, a clear warning on the administration list is necessary stating that colchicine poses health risks for the healthcare professional who administers the medication. Furthermore, the medication bag must state that the colchicine is in the strip packaging. In this case, the warning message was missing from the administration list. The medication bag only stated in small letters that the colchicine was in the strip packaging. In another hospital with the same automation system (HiX), there was a warning on the administration list for colchicine. The reason why the warning message did not appear in the hospital where the incident occurred is not known.

Recommendations

For public and hospital pharmacists

- Check whether the (hospital) pharmacy information system provides a warning message for colchicine and other medicines with health risks when processing or filling. If not, check the settings and contact the software supplier if necessary.
- Ensure that the warning messages are clearly stated on the administration lists for medicines with health risks so that the healthcare professional recognizes them and can act accordingly.
- State on the administration list if a medicine in strip packaging is in the medicine roll.
- Realize that patients who use medicines that are packaged in the strip packaging in the medicine roll need sufficient explanation about the correct use of the medication.

For healthcare professionals who administer medicines

- For medicines with a warning message on the administration list, take the appropriate measures to protect yourself and the environment. Also realize that these medicines may be in the strip packaging in the medicine roll.
- Before handing a medication bag to the patient, check whether there are medicines in the strip packaging. If so, instruct the patient to push the medicines out of the strip packaging before taking them.

For pharmacists who package medicines in medicine rolls

- Clearly state on the bag that a medicine in the strip packaging is packaged in the medicine roll.