Drugs of Dependence Unit

Guideline for the Disposal of Transdermal Drug of Dependence Delivery Systems

Background

The availability of drug of dependence-containing transdermal delivery systems (TDS) provides a useful treatment option for certain patients. In particular, patients suffering absorption and side effect complications with oral preparations may find that TDS, or ‘patches’, provide an effective source of pain relief.

Current TDS retain significant amounts of active drug after the duration of their use. Therefore there is a risk of their abuse subsequent to removal from the patient. Reports are also to hand of the accidental overdose and death of children who have accessed TDS.

Health Services (Nursing Homes)

The Drugs of Dependence Unit has been asked to clarify the legal and ‘best practice’ positions regarding the disposal of used TDS within the nursing home setting. The Unit has determined there is no legal requirement for nursing home staff to record the disposal of used TDS, as it is believed regulation 45 of the Controlled Substances (Poisons) Regulations 2011 (SA) does not apply to such disposal.

Notwithstanding, the Unit has identified various practices applicable to the disposal of used TDS within the nursing home setting. Those practices are documented below.

Major health services within South Australia have been advised of minimum standards of practice for the appropriate disposal of TDS. Relevant practices have been extrapolated to the nursing home setting. Namely, that the:

1. Disposal process – including the removal of the TDS from the patient’s person – is witnessed.
2. TDS are folded onto themselves (adhesive sides facing each other)
3. TDS are placed in a sharps medical-waste disposal container.
4. Disposal process is recorded in the drug of dependence register, and countersigned by the witness.

High-temperature incineration is ultimately the most acceptable destruction method of TDS. Nursing home staff should contact their preferred waste-disposal operator to have sharps medical-waste disposal containers collected for incineration.

4. Disposal of Patches Containing S8 Drugs (e.g. buprenorphine, fentanyl), South Australian Therapeutics Advisory Group, Mar 2006.
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Community Pharmacies

The disposal of patients’ unused medication, subsequently returned to community pharmacies, has been raised at a recent PSA Professional Practice committee meeting.

Regulation 45 of the Controlled Substances (Poisons) Regulations 2011 (SA) specifies that unused drugs of dependence, including TDS drugs such as Durogesic® and Norspan®, may be destroyed only in certain circumstances;

a) the destruction is witnessed by another person, being an authorised officer, police officer, medical practitioner, dentist, veterinary surgeon, pharmacist or nurse; and

b) the person destroying the drug ensures that the following information is recorded in respect of the drug immediately after its destruction:

   I. the full names and signatures of the person and the witness to the destruction; and

   II. the trade name or approved name of the drug or, if it did not have either a trade name or approved name, its ingredients; and

   III. the amount and where applicable, the strength of the drug; and

   IV. the date and time of destruction; and

   V. the amount of the drug (if any) now remaining in stock on the premises at which the destroyed drug was stored.

Poisons must not be disposed of in any place or manner that is a risk to public health or safety. As such, sharps medical-waste disposal containers, where the container is ultimately incinerated, are the most appropriate method of disposing of TDS.

While the Unit has determined that recording the destruction of used TDS is not legally required, pharmacists wishing to adopt best practice are encouraged to ensure the:

1. Disposal process is witnessed.

2. TDS are folded onto themselves (adhesive sides facing each other)

3. TDS are placed in a sharps medical-waste disposal container.

4. Disposal process is recorded in the drug of dependence register, and countersigned by the witness.

The Pharmacy Guild of Australia (SA Branch) currently provides sharps medical-waste disposal containers for South Australian pharmacies. While the containers are subsidised through DASSA’s Clean Needle Program, and are thus intended to be repositories for injecting equipment, the containers may also be used for disposal of TDS. Pharmacies may arrange for the provision, emptying, and disposal of sharps medical-waste disposal containers directly through Ms Tonina Dipilato at the Guild on (08) 8304 8300 or via email tonina.dipilato@guild.org.au.
In the Home

Patients who are prescribed or supplied TDS preparations are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the Consumer Medicine Information for the respective products; Durogesic® (fentanyl) and Norspan® (buprenorphine). These documents contain instructions regarding changing and disposing of TDS.

Patients should be encouraged to ensure the
1. used TDS are folded onto themselves (adhesive sides facing each other), and
2. are wrapped in newspaper, or similar, and discarded in general household refuse, or
3. Returned to the pharmacy for disposal.

Unused TDS should be returned to the pharmacy for disposal.

The above measures will help to prevent subsequent misuse of used TDS, but will also make them less accessible to children and animals.

For more information

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