

Suggested Policy/Protocol for Practice Nurses assisting GPs with patients on Methadone Treatment Protocol

Policy Statement: *This policy acknowledges the importance of the role of the Practice Nurse in the management of patients on the methadone treatment protocol. The policy outlines the parameters of the role with the ultimate goal of patient safety.*

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the nurses employed by the practice:

- are aware of their role in the management of clients on methadone
- work within their scope of practice
- can practice safely as part of the Multidisciplinary Team

Scope

All members of staff employed by the practice will be made aware of this policy. The practice nurse/s and GP/s will work to the policy

Roles and Responsibilities

- The Practice Nurse must be registered with An Bord Altranais and work according to the code of professional conduct
- It is the responsibility of the GP, as the employer, to ensure that the nurse has evidence of adequate training and/or experience to safely carry out the duties associated with managing this patient group. Level 1 training on ICGP website can be accessed by Nurse together with GP. If administering vaccinations nurse is required to have training in anaphylaxis. Recognised training in phlebotomy required if taking blood for viral screens. To maintain competencies nurse should engage in on-going professional development e.g. training in drug awareness/alcohol problems, relapse prevention, child protection, management of pregnant substance misusers, clinical audit.
- It is the responsibility of the GP to continue to have the lead role in the management of this client group
- It is the responsibility of the nurse to ensure that s/he works within their scope of practice according to An Bord Altranais Scope of Practice Framework/Guidelines

The Role of the Nurse may include the following (this will be decided between the GP and Nurse):

- Carry out initial assessment before referring to GP (Level 2)
- Carry out drug screens
- Obtain viral screens for HIV, Hep Screen (Hep A,B and C) or any other tests requested by GP
- Follow up appropriately having obtained results of viral screens. This includes:
 - Immunisation (vaccinations to be prescribed by GP)
 - The provision of advice regarding risk behaviour
 - Assist with appropriate referral e.g. to Hepatology
- Document all interventions as per An Bord Altranais Guidelines on record keeping
- Liaison with local services e.g. GP liaison nurse, psychiatric services, addiction services etc.

It is also the role of the Nurse to monitor stable patients, referring to GP when patient:

- Shows signs of destabilising, i.e. urinalysis positive for opiates, benzodiazepines, cocaine etc.
- Has missed a dose of methadone (one day or more)
- Cannot provide sample for drug screen

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- Appears under the influence of substances
- Has not been seen by GP in previous 3-4 weeks
- Requests to see GP
- Requests change in dose

Monitoring

- This policy will be reviewed annually and revised if required
- The policy will be reviewed following a near miss or untoward incident relating to the management of patients on MTP where the nurse was involved
- Audit (external or internal) of practice should be carried out annually

References:

1. Recording Clinical practice: Guidance to Nurses and Midwives (An Bord Altranais Nov 2002)
2. Scope of Nursing and Midwifery Practice Framework (An Bord Altranais April 2000)
3. Guidance to Nurses and Midwives on Medication Management (An Bord Altranais July 2007)

All accessed 30th May 2012 <http://www.nursingboard.ie/en/policies-guidelines.aspx?page=1> and 2

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