

# System Safety Update - Opioids

*Communication of urgent / topical  
safety issues March 23*

*Signposting to resources - Opioids*

The first stop  
for professional  
medicines advice



## RECENT NEWS, UPDATES, ALERTS AND NOTIFICATIONS

### [SPS Medication Safety Update](#)

A slide deck resource collating the latest medication safety communications and publications to inform, support and inspire medication safety improvements.

### [Management of National Patient Safety Alerts](#)

Supporting information for providers to manage National Patient Safety Alerts

### [Withdrawal of pholcodine-containing products](#)

Following the conclusion of a review of post-marketing safety data by the MHRA, all pholcodine-containing medicines are being recalled and withdrawn from the UK as a precaution.



**England**



Making medicines and medical devices safer

## OPIOID RESOURCES

### [Sharing examples of good practice when having challenging conversations about opioids with patients](#)

Dr Nat Wright & Dr Caroline Watson share their experiences about how to have positive and constructive consultations with patients on long term opioids

### [Opioids – the patient voice](#)

A recorded interview with Louise Trewern discussing her personal experience with opioids and withdrawal

### [Live well with pain](#)



Resources for clinicians and healthcare professionals working with people with pain

### [Opioids Aware](#)



Resource for patients and healthcare professionals to support prescribing of opioid medicines for pain

## OPIOID RELATED PUBLICATIONS

### [Optimising personalised care for adults prescribed medicines associated with dependence or withdrawal symptoms](#)

NHSE have proposed actions to help systems develop plans that can support people who are taking medicines associated with dependence and withdrawal symptoms

### [Polypharmacy in older people: A guide for healthcare professionals](#)

All Wales Medicines Strategy Group provides practical guides for stopping medications including benzos & Z-drugs, opioids in non-cancer pain and gabapentinoids in neuropathic pain

### [Comparative effectiveness and safety of analgesic medicines for adults with acute non-specific low back pain: systematic review and network meta-analysis](#)

A BMJ published article related to opioid use in patients with back pain

## MEDICATION SAFETY RELATED PUBLICATIONS

### [World Patient Safety Day 2023: Engaging Patients for Patient Safety](#)



The theme this year is in recognition of the crucial role that patients, families and caregivers play in the safety of healthcare

### [Challenges and Strategies for Patient Safety in Primary Care: A Qualitative Study](#)

Key safety issues identified included the lack of interoperability among health information systems, clinician-patient communication failures, and challenges with medication reconciliation.

### [HSIB interim report explores impact of staff wellbeing on patient safety](#)



This report on staff wellbeing across urgent and emergency care systems shows a strong link between patient safety and wellbeing and HSIB makes a recommendation that this be included as a critical component of patient safety in the NHS Patient Safety Strategy.

## PREVENTION OF FUTURE DEATHS REPORT

Deceased worked for Transport for London and had an accident over 20 years ago injuring her back and resulting in continuing chronic back pain for which she took prescribed medication. She was prescribed large doses of gabapentin, tramadol and amitriptyline alongside fentanyl patches and diazepam. Family report that she was not very good at managing this medication. Cause of death - Likely inadvertent overdose (a fall may well have contributed)

### Coroners concerns

- Polypharmacy including opiates represents a severe safety risk in patients with a iatrogenic drug dependency.
- Coroner identified the challenges managing patients with chronic pain - a scenario that seems to be an invidious one for GP's and patients alike
- Changes required – including the need to rationalise or reduce the medications
- Actions required system wide

[Ref: 2023-0070](#)