

# Medicine of the month



This is the latest edition of a regular bulletin prepared by Medicines Information for distribution to all **medical, nursing and pharmacy staff** within MYHT. It focuses on important local prescribing issues.

April 2020

## SWITCH TO MORPHINE FOR INJECTION FOR PALLIATIVE CARE

### Background

Following on-going supply issues with **Diamorphine** injection, it has been decided to switch to using **Morphine sulphate** injection as the first line opioid injection.

From **27<sup>th</sup> April** Morphine injection will be used for all Palliative care prescriptions at the Mid Yorkshire hospitals and the hospices at Wakefield and Pontefract and also in Primary care. The switch is also taking place region-wide at Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS FT and Primary care.

This will bring us in line with Bradford, Leeds and Kirklees who stayed with Morphine after similar shortages a few years ago.

Morphine injection is significantly more cost effective than Diamorphine and comes as a ready to use solution of **10mg per ml** and **30mg per ml**.

### Differences to be aware of with Morphine Sulphate

There is no difference in efficacy between the two opioids, but the dose and volume to give will be different.

**Diamorphine is stronger than Morphine** and is highly soluble. Therefore, high doses of Diamorphine can be dissolved in very small volumes of Water for Injection.

**Diamorphine 10mg injection sc = Morphine sulphate 15mg injection sc  
= 30mg oral Morphine sulphate**

The maximum dose of Morphine that can be given by sc syringe driver is 360mg in 30ml over 24 hours. For higher doses, Diamorphine will still be used. Please contact SPCT.

The maximum dose of Morphine to be administered by sc injection is 60mg in 2ml.

## **Exceptions**

Where possible the use of Diamorphine for other indications should also be switched to Morphine Sulphate. The following exceptions apply:

- Lumbar Spine Caesarean Section (Obstetrics)
- Paediatrics – Intranasal use in the Emergency departments
- Palliative Care – Patients requiring very high doses of Morphine
- Midwives - As an alternative to Pethidine for analgesia in labour
- Spinal/Epidural anesthesia and analgesia

Diamorphine injection will remain available to order for these exceptions including 100mg ampoules.

## **Syringe Driver Compatibility**

Diamorphine and Morphine have similar compatibility profiles in Continuous Subcutaneous Syringe Drivers. However, it is important to check with your usual reference sources before administering any new combination.

### **The following documents and policies have been updated to reflect this change:**

- Guidelines on Prescribing Anticipatory Drugs and Syringe Drivers in the Community for Adults
- Community Palliative Care Chart
- Symptom Control Guidelines (for use in the adult dying patient at MidYorks and the hospices)

These can all be found in the Palliative Care section of the Intranet along with the Opioid Conversion Wheel.

- SystemOne Anticipatory medicines Formulary
- EPaCCs
- eMeds

### **For further advice or information please contact:**

Medicines Information Tel: 01924 541394 or Ext: 51394

Specialist Palliative Care Team (SPCT) Tel: 01924 543801 (Mon-Fri 9am – 5pm)

Out of hours contact the On-call Palliative care consultant via Hospital Switchboard