

**The safer management of controlled drugs:  
Annual report 2015**

## **Annex 2: Report of the Cross Border Group**

July 2016

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# The Cross-Border Group

The Cross-Border Group for safer management of controlled drugs in the devolved administrations met in March and September 2015. It includes the Controlled Drugs Accountable Officers' Network Scotland (CDAON), the Health and Social Care Board of Northern Ireland, NHS Wales and the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) of Ireland. The group continues to provide a forum to discuss controlled drug matters at a strategic level.

## Scotland

In Scotland, the Controlled Drugs Accountable Officers' Network Scotland (CDAON) introduced flash reports in 2014 to increase awareness of controlled drug-related issues regarding patient safety and prescribing issues. Areas of focus in 2015 included Gabapentin and Pregabalin in the Risk of Misuse, Changes to the Misuse of Drugs Regulations and Oral Methadone in Community Pharmacies.

CDAON worked jointly with the Therapeutics Branch of the Scottish Government Pharmacy and Medicines department and the Scottish Prescribing Advisors Association to develop National Therapeutic Indicators (NTIs) that are specifically focused on controlled drugs. This included prescribing measures for the use of tramadol, dihydrocodeine and also a review of morphine as a percentage of all opiates. NTIs can be used to identify variance in prescribing and are aimed to improve quality, safety and efficiency of primary care prescribing.

CDAON, in conjunction with Health Improvement Scotland (HIS), developed a resource sheet, *Information for new Controlled Drugs Accountable Officers*. This gives information regarding the CDAO webpages, which are hosted by NHS Education for Scotland (NES) Knowledge Network. The web pages hold a range of useful material and information including nationally-agreed documentation, and are available [here](#).

During 2015, HIS developed electronic forms for independent healthcare providers to report controlled drug incidents.

The Care Inspectorate (CI) also introduced similar online reporting for Care Homes in Scotland.

CDAON is developing work relating to the prison service, and the CDAOWG has produced a national Self-Assessment Questionnaire to facilitate the standardised review of the management of controlled drugs with NHS Prison health care services across Scotland.

## Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland has parallel Misuse of Drugs Regulations in operation and work continues to ensure that, where appropriate, these remain equivalent to provisions in Great Britain.

The Medicines Regulatory Group (MRG) of the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) is involved in a pilot project alongside the Health and Social Care Board NI and the regional Business Services Organisation. The Controlled Drug Reconciliation Project (CDRP) seeks to reconcile data for controlled drugs supply from wholesalers to community pharmacies in Northern Ireland on a routine basis against dispensing claims data. The aims of the project are to ensure compliance with Misuse of Drugs legislation, to reduce the potential for illicit diversion and therefore ensure public safety and uphold confidence in the pharmacy profession.

Amendments to the Controlled Drugs (Supervision of Management and Use) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009 came into operation on 16 July 2015. These amendments were made to make provision for additional safeguards that were introduced in England and Scotland on 1 April 2013, and have also enabled alignment of certain arrangements with those in England, Scotland and Wales. The amendments include, but are not limited to:

- Giving responsibility to the accountable officer of the Regional Health and Social Care Board for establishing the local intelligence network.
- Inserting a definition of 'relevant independent hospital' to take into account those independent hospitals that are not providing healthcare, have no controlled drug activity, and where a determination would create disproportionate difficulties for the independent hospital in question.
- Including the armed forces in the list of designated bodies.
- Amending the definition of 'regulatory body' to include the Northern Ireland Social Care Council.
- Amending conditions for appointing an accountable officer to provide more flexibility for smaller organisations while ensuring that the accountable officer has sufficient seniority to have credibility within their organization.

The list of standard operating procedures (SOPs) has been extended to include a requirement for SOPs covering the prescribing, supply and administration of controlled drugs and the clinical monitoring of patients who are prescribed controlled drugs.

## Wales

NHS Wales continued to focus on opioid analgesic prescribing across Wales. In September 2015, the Welsh Government's Advisory Panel on Substance Misuse produced the report *Reducing the harms associated with prescription-only analgesics: Tramadol*. The report made recommendations to address the issue of deaths associated with tramadol and other POM medicines, which is available [here](#).

The All Wales Toxicology and Therapeutics Centre (AWTTC) produced a prescribing analysis update in March 2015 to keep health boards in Wales informed on any changes in prescribing since the Tramadol Educational Resource Materials were made available for use in NHS Wales in November 2013, and to benchmark current prescribing data with that of other health boards, England and NE England. The report *NHS Wales Primary Care Prescribing Analysis For Tramadol – Data To September 2014* is available [here](#).

Guidance was produced for health and justice healthcare and pharmacy service providers, health and justice commissioners and controlled drugs accountable officers about the expected handling of Tramadol in residential health and justice sites in Wales, which is available [here](#).

## Ireland

The Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) manages the application and issue process for controlled drug licences and registrations on behalf of the Department of Health in Ireland. The HPRA also participates in European stakeholder meetings, including representation at the Cross-Border Group. Guidance documents for stakeholders are available on the HPRA website ([www.HPRA.ie](http://www.HPRA.ie)).

The Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (PSI) regulates and provides legislative and practice guidance regarding the management of controlled drugs within pharmacy services in Ireland. Annual reports, a list of Authorised Officers and guidance are available on the website.

The National Advisory Committee on Drugs and Alcohol (NACDA) has an Early Warning Emerging Trends subcommittee, which advises the Irish Government on the prevalence, consequences, prevention and treatment of substance use and misuse based on analysis and interpretation of research findings. The subcommittee comprises representatives of relevant national and forensic laboratories, law enforcement agencies, relevant government departments, health services and the voluntary and community sectors. It shares information on emerging trends and patterns in drug use, particularly poly drug use and associated risks.