

Gabapentinoids - improving safety of prescribing in County Durham

County Durham Medicines Optimisation Team

Context

- Gabapentinoids are classified as Dependence Forming Medicines and have limited evidence for efficacy in chronic pain.
- They are associated with a risk of severe respiratory depression, especially in those on high doses, concomitant opioids or with renal impairment¹ and have high misuse and diversion potential².
- In 2021 it was identified that County Durham was amongst the highest prescribing areas in the country
- There were large numbers of patients on high doses, and large numbers prescribed to elderly patients; there was a need to reduce this prescribing due to the safety concerns.
- It was also recognised that there were a large number of patients prescribed these medications and GP practices felt overwhelmed and unsure where to start.

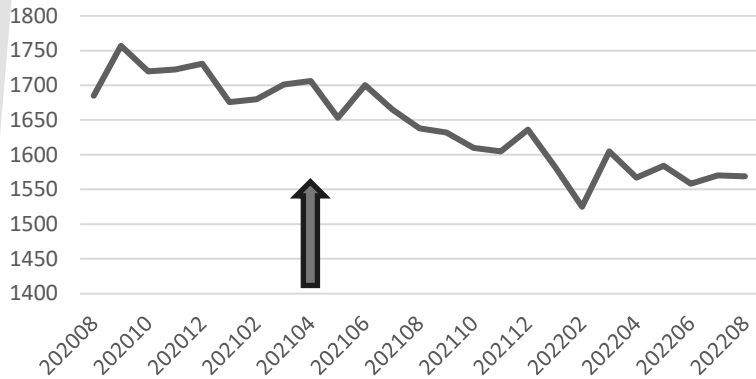


Figure 1 - Number of patients prescribed high strength gabapentinoids

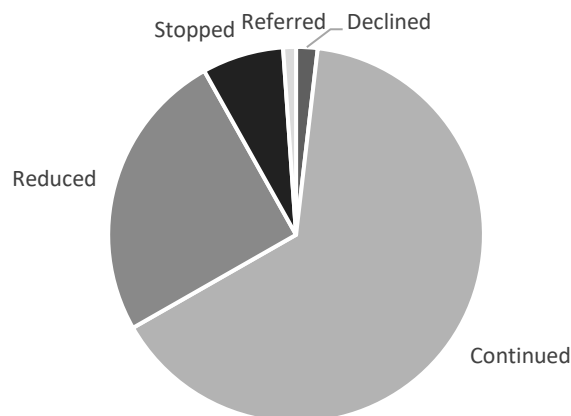


Figure 2 - Outcome of over 85 years review

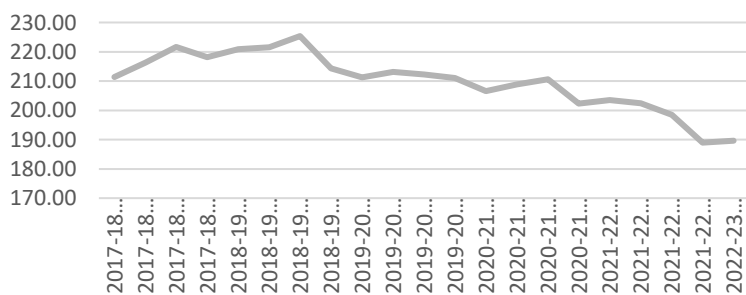


Figure 3 - Gabapentinoid ADQ per STAR-PU in County Durham

Intervention

- The County Durham Medicines Optimisation (MO) Team developed a programme of workstreams for GP practices
- The aim was to ensure high risk patients were reviewed to maximise safety while managing workload in practices
 1. Patients on high strength gabapentinoids
 2. Patients aged over 85 on gabapentinoids
 3. Patients aged 80-84 on gabapentinoids
 4. Patients aged 75-79 on gabapentinoids
- The MO team also provided additional support including clinician education and example deprescribing regimes.

Effect of the intervention

- **Two workstreams have been completed to date**
- Workstream 1 - Patients on high strength gabapentinoids
 - 1307 patients were reviewed on high strengths of gabapentin and pregabalin in Q2 2021-22
 - The number of patients prescribed high strength gabapentinoids in Q1 2022-23 compared to Q1 2021-22 has reduced by 7% (see Figure 1)
- Workstream 2 - Patients aged over 85 on gabapentinoids
 - 812 patients were reviewed in Q2 2022-23
 - 164 patients (20%) had a dose reduction and 57 (7%) had the medication stopped (see Figure 2)
- Overall
 - The volume of gabapentinoids prescribed in Q1 2022-23 compared to Q1 2021-22 (as ADQ per STAR-PU) in County Durham has reduced by 4% (see Figure 3)

Conclusions

- A programme of MO workstreams for GP practices in County Durham has been effective in improving the safety of prescribing of gabapentinoids in County Durham.
- So far a significant number of high risk patients have had their medication reviewed and appropriately stopped or reduced and there has been a reduction in prescribing volume across the County.
- It is planned that further workstreams will be carried out with reducing age ranges, and that this model may also be applied to low strength opioids where numbers are also high.

References

1. <https://www.gov.uk/drug-safety-update/gabapentin-neurontin-risk-of-severe-respiratory-depression>
2. <https://www.gov.uk/drug-safety-update/pregabalin-lyrica-gabapentin-neurontin-and-risk-of-abuse-and-dependence-new-scheduling-requirements-from-1-april>