

PRESS STATEMENT

CCA launches audit on valproate safety for community pharmacies

EMBARGOED 10:00AM MONDAY 18 JUNE 2018

The Company Chemists' Association (CCA) has today launched an audit tool for community pharmacy teams to use in reviewing their support for girls and women taking valproate medicines

The CCA, as the host of the cross-sector [Community Pharmacy Patient Safety Group](#), has been alert to the risks surrounding valproate medicines used in pregnancy for several years now. However, it is still clear that across the whole health and care system, more can be done to support girls and women taking these medicines.

Research has shown that there is a significant risk of birth defects and developmental disorders in all children born to women who take valproate-containing medicines during their pregnancy. Previous efforts to raise awareness of the risks around valproate in pregnancy have however not been successful. In 2016, it is suspected that over 400 women taking valproate became pregnant.

In April 2018, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) [changed the licence](#) for valproate medicines so that they must no longer be prescribed to women or girls of childbearing potential unless they are on a Pregnancy Prevention Programme. This licence change is intended to drive a shift in behaviour for healthcare professionals and a shift in awareness of the risks for these patients. It essentially brings valproate into line with other medicines which should never be taken in pregnancy, like thalidomide.

This practice-based audit will seek to explore community pharmacy's contribution in supporting girls and women of childbearing potential in taking valproate medicines. It will help pharmacists and their teams to review and reflect on their current practice and to assess what changes may need to be made.

CCA member companies will be disseminating the audit resources directly to their pharmacy teams over the next few weeks so that they can participate. However, given the importance of this year's topic, the CCA wholeheartedly urges all community pharmacies to participate.

Kate Livesey, Policy & Programmes Manager at the CCA commented:

"Community pharmacy teams play a vital role in the care of patients taking these high-risk medicines. Given the importance of this year's topic, we would like to see pharmacy teams from all across the country getting involved in our audit and reviewing their current practice. We're really keen to build a body of evidence from across the whole sector that demonstrates what pharmacy teams are doing to improve care and minimise the risk of harm around valproate in pregnancy."

To download the audit materials, [please click here](#). The first phase of the audit begins in July 2018.

About the CCA

The CCA is the trade association for large pharmacy operators in England, Scotland and Wales. Our membership includes ASDA, Boots, LloydsPharmacy, Morrisons, Rowlands Pharmacy, Superdrug, Tesco, and Well, who between them own and operate over 6,000 pharmacies, which represents nearly half the market. Our members deliver a broad range of healthcare and wellbeing services, from a variety of locations and settings, as well as dispensing over 500 million NHS prescription items every year.

The CCA represents the interests of its members and brings together their unique skills, knowledge and scale for the benefit of community pharmacy, the NHS, patients and the public. Our vision is that everyone, everywhere, can benefit from world class healthcare and wellbeing services provided by their community pharmacy.

Contact information

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