







Learning from Medication Errors during the Pandemic

During the pandemic, many customers have reported that the number of errors in their services has increased.

So we need to look at:

-  **Why the number of errors has gone up**
-  **What action you can take**
-  **How we can prevent these errors in the future**
-  **How OPUS can help**

Why have errors increased?

There is no doubt that this last year has been a very stressful time, particularly for the care sector and for individuals. Errors can occur for a number of reasons but of particular note at present, we have seen errors in the following circumstances:

- ➔ Where staff are working in a new role or setting and are unfamiliar with the systems and processes
- ➔ Where staff are unfamiliar with the people they are supporting and their needs, due to redeployment into a new setting
- ➔ Where staff are feeling under pressure due to lack of senior/ experienced staff to rely on for information and guidance
- ➔ Where staff are struggling with their mental health e.g. feeling anxious or depressed as a result of either personal or work circumstances
- ➔ Where staff are tiring of the lockdown rules and the pressures these bring e.g. feeling weary and unmotivated

All of the above scenarios are in addition to the familiar causes of error e.g. complacency, distractions, incorrect procedures, lack of knowledge and skills etc.

What can you do to address the errors?

It is particularly important to provide support to staff when dealing with errors during the pandemic and to draw up an action plan as follows:



Action Plan

- 1 Review the error and the circumstances surrounding it and identify the causes of the error
- 2 Identify if training or competency assessment is needed to address the error
- 3 Identify if any changes need to be made to processes to prevent the error occurring again
- 4 Nominate a mentor to support the staff member
- 5 Discuss the nature of the error (anonymised) with staff in your regular team meetings / handover sessions to avoid other staff making the same mistake

How can you prevent these errors in the future?



By auditing your errors and categorising them, you can determine how likely they are to arise in the future and identify the measures needed to reduce the likelihood of errors occurring.



- 1** **OPUS** can provide a 1-hour Medicines Error Clinic via Zoom to address the errors made and discuss how to prevent them and offer advice and guidance.
- 2** **OPUS** can provide an [accredited training programme](#) for staff to ensure a consistent approach. Our training provides practical tips to carry out medicines-related procedures in line with best practice, with the aim of minimising errors.
- 3** **OPUS** can provide Managers training to empower and enable Managers to assess competency of their staff using the [Assessors Workshop for Medicines Handling](#) virtual learning course. Alternatively this can be done online through the pandemic using the [foundation or advanced online competency assessments](#).
- 4** **OPUS** can review and update your medicines policy and procedures to make sure the procedures are in line with best practice and are easy to read visual flowcharts, to make them simpler to implement for staff.
- 5** **OPUS** can provide medicines advice and support for staff for all medicines-related questions and queries. OPUS can advise on reducing medicines errors and the remedial actions necessary to minimise the likelihood of them reoccurring.

OPUS Medicines Error Support Poster for Staff

To ensure staff know what to do if they make an error and the action they should take if they notice an error made by someone else, the following easy-to-follow poster can be used as a handout distributed to staff, or displayed in your workplace.

I think I have made a medicines error, what should I do?

- ✓ Tell my line manager straight away
- ✓ Make sure the person I support is safe
- ✓ Complete the accredited [OPUS Safe Handling of Medicines Foundation medicines training](#) and undertake the [OPUS foundation online competency assessment](#)
- ✓ Action any advice given by my line manager or healthcare professional as appropriate
- ✓ Write down what happened so I don't forget the details

What do I need to do next?

REVIEW AND REFLECT




- ✓ Make sure I am familiar with my organisation's medicines policy and procedures
- ✓ Make sure I am familiar with the people I support and their particular needs
- ✓ Think about the error I made and what I need to do to prevent it happening again
- ✓ Make sure I am familiar with the 6 Rights of Administration (RIGHT person, medicine, dose, time, route and RIGHT to refuse)
- ✓ Make sure I know when and who to ask if I am uncertain about anything

**For further information and advice about
how OPUS can help, please contact one of
our friendly team:**

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