

Learning Cascade

Safe Prescribing & Administration of Depot Injections

Target Audience

All clinical staff.

Introduction

Antipsychotic depots are medications that are used to treat mental health conditions. It is important that they are prescribed accurately and checked prior to administration. Depot injections can be prescribed at a range of frequencies depending on the needs of the patient. In an inpatient setting, depot injections are never prescribed on a **“when required”** basis and should instead always be prescribed as **“regular”** prescriptions.

In the community setting, depot injections are prescribed under the **“when required”** section on EPMA to allow a degree of flexibility with regards to the day on which the patient has their depot administered. However, the intention is still to administer at regular intervals (such as weekly, fortnightly, three-weekly or four-weekly) depending on the clinical needs of the patient.

Summary of Incident

A patient was transferred from the community setting to an inpatient ward. The depot injection should have been discontinued from the **“when required”** section of **EPMA** and prescribed as an immediate (**STAT**) dose. However, the depot was prescribed daily to enable immediate administration to avoid a missed dose, with the intention of changing it to a regular prescription for weekly administration thereafter. Due to multiple distractions, the doctor forgot to discontinue the daily prescription, and it remained as daily administration on EPMA.

The pharmacist checked and verified the prescription on EPMA, however missed the error of daily prescribing. Unfortunately, the depot continued to be administered daily for four consecutive days by the nursing staff. The error was identified by the patient questioning the reason for daily administration on the fourth day.

Identified Learning

Prescribers:

- Dose and frequency must be carefully reviewed before confirming prescriptions, ensuring that any intended amendments—such as discontinuing temporary or incorrect frequencies—are fully completed, particularly after interruptions or distractions.
- Seek advice from Pharmacy or **EPMA** on how to prescribe when unsure about frequency or dosing.
- Ensure selection of the correct frequency of administration and use of **STAT** prescribing on EPMA for immediate administration where appropriate.

Pharmacy:

- Apply enhanced scrutiny when verifying depot prescriptions, particularly non-standard frequencies.
- Escalate discrepancies to the prescriber and nurse in charge before administration.

Nursing Staff:

- Be aware that depot prescriptions are never prescribed as daily prescriptions.
- Check EPMA history prior to administration.
- Escalate unusual prescriptions including PRN depots.

EPMA Team:

- The EPMA team have now **removed** the **“Other Frequency”** option to reduce risk of incorrect depot prescribing.

For further information contact the **NELFT Pharmacy Medicines Safety Team**.

Refer to the [Pharmacy Intranet page](#) for contact details.

Date: 07/05/2026

Learning Cascade No: PSI2026-04

