

October 2015

Alert No: 21

Monitoring after administration of medication for rapid tranquilisation

In May 2015, NICE published updated [guidance on the short-term management of violence and aggression](#) in the mental health setting. The guidance gives clear evidence-based advice on the use of medication for rapid tranquilisation (RT). NICE now specifically defines RT as, the “*use of medication by the parenteral route if oral medication is not possible or appropriate and urgent sedation with medication is needed*”.

The NICE guidance particularly reinforces the importance of physical health monitoring for service users following RT. All practitioners administering medication for RT in ELFT are required to complete the monitoring specified by the Trust’s [Rapid Tranquilisation Policy](#). However, the last time monitoring was audited in ELFT, it was found to be completed correctly for only 68% of service users. This is an unacceptably low level, as failure to complete the monitoring exposes service users to an increased risk of harm.

The NICE guidance also makes it clear that if service users become drowsy, or fall asleep, after the administration of medicines for RT, then this should prompt an increased level of monitoring. Sleepiness/drowsiness can be caused by the CNS-depressing effect of the medication used for RT. CNS depression can in turn lead to compromised respiratory and circulatory function- signs of which should be closely monitored for.

Actions

1. Teams must ensure that all service users who are administered parenteral medication for RT are correctly monitored as per the ELFT Rapid Tranquilisation Policy. This means that, as a minimum, the following parameters should be monitored and recorded accurately every 15 minutes:
 - Pulse
 - Blood pressure
 - Respiratory rate
 - Temperature
 - Level of consciousness
 - Check for side effects
2. All clinical staff must be aware that sleepiness/drowsiness in service users administered RT medication is an indication that increased monitoring is required.