Management of medication incidents involving KCL nursing and midwifery students

Guidance has been requested on the appropriate management of a student who is involved in a medication error, and when a referral to the Faculty Fitness to Practice Committee for screening / further action is required. This is outlined below. Placement provider policies and procedures must be followed and the scope of this guidance is for the subsequent reporting to the Faculty and the management of the student’s learning.

Each medication incident normally has a number of contextual factors that influence the occurrence of the error and as such the guidance below contains broad principles. Both the student and mentor should inform the King’s College London (King’s) link lecturer or personal tutor when a medication incident has occurred. The link lecturer or personal tutor will then inform the King’s account manager and the cohort lead for the student. In situations where there is a lack of consensus on the appropriate management guidance will be provided by the Director of Clinical Education at King’s.

Assumption

That the student is only ever involved in administering a medication that they have been involved in preparing.

Key issues to consider

- Was the supervision given to the student direct, indirect, assumed or absent?
- Was the correct process deliberately violated?
- Was the patient harmed directly or indirectly as a direct consequence of the incident?

Broad principles

The following four areas below address the main types of medication incidents that students are involved in:

1

This guidance was reviewed in August 2014, and will be reviewed in August 2015 or sooner should this be required. Angela Parry, Director of Clinical Education.
1. In a student who has not previously raised a cause for concern a single oral / injectable (non IV)/ topical etc medication administration error would usually result in a formative fail on the medication management competencies. An action plan should be written with the involvement of the link lecturer / clinical teacher, mentor, student. The action plan should be reviewed by the mentor at the summative assessment stage of the placement and if achieved no further action is needed. A note should be made in the students file by the link lecturer or personal tutor. In the case of a final placement student an extension to the placement may be required to provide assurance to the sign off mentor and the Faculty that the student is fit for registration.

2) A medication error by a student at any point in their programme that involves an intravenous medication administration error would normally result in a referral to the Faculty Fitness to Practice committee (students may prepare medication for intravenous administration but must never administer IV medication). Engagement in IV medication administration is outside the scope of a students’ professional practice. Referral to the Faculty Fitness to Practice committee may involve suspension from practice if removal from all medication administration cannot be assured until the case is reviewed by the committee.

3) Disregard of safe medication practice e.g. carrying medication on own person, administering without supervision would result in a fail at the formative level. Referral to the Faculty Fitness to Practice Committee for further management of the student’s learning is recommended as this type of activity is beyond the scope of the students’ practice. Referral to the Faculty Fitness to Practice committee may involve suspension from practice if removal from all medication administration cannot be assured until the case is reviewed by the committee.

4) It is recommended that any medication administration error that results in harm to the patient is referred to the Faculty Fitness to Practice committee if the information available to the Faculty indicates that the student’s behaviour falls below the standard that could be reasonably expected by a student at that point in their programme. Referral to the Faculty Fitness to Practice committee may involve suspension from practice if removal from all medication administration cannot be assured until the case is reviewed by the committee.

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