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Uppsala Monitoring Centre

– Building a global safety culture

About us:

Inspire. Engage. Transform.

Uppsala Monitoring Centre advances the science of pharmacovigilance and inspires patient safety initiatives all over the world. As an independent, non-profit foundation, we engage stakeholders who share our vision and collaborate to build a global patient safety culture.

As a leader in the research and development of new scientific methods, we explore the benefits and risks of medicines to help minimize harm to patients, and offer products and services used by health authorities and life-science companies worldwide.

Our unique expertise makes us an organisation with the capacity to transform patient safety from an ambition into a reality. For more than 40 years, we have provided scientific leadership and operational support to the WHO Programme for International Drug Monitoring, expanding the global pharmacovigilance network to reach more than 95% of world's population.

take & tell

Together for safer medicines

Uppsala Monitoring Centre

What is pharmacovigilance?

Monitoring, assessing and understanding adverse effects, or other drug-related problems, is known as pharmacovigilance, and is essential as long as a medicine remains on the market. You can contribute to better drug safety by noting down possible side effects – known also as adverse drug reactions - of drugs and reporting them to your health care provider.

What are side effects?

Side effects, or adverse drug reactions, happen when a treatment goes beyond the desired effect and causes a problem. It can be mild, serious and in some cases lead to death. Experts say that side effects vary for each patient and depend largely on their general health, the state of their disease, age, weight and gender.

Aren't side effects checked while a medicine is being developed?

Many medicines display unexpected side effects that can vary from individual to individual. Many of these effects are picked up during drug development, but since only a restricted number of selected patients are treated during this phase, it is unlikely that rare adverse reactions will be observed. Then, as the drug becomes available on the market and more people take it, previously unknown effects are likely to emerge. Low quality and falsified medicines can also cause serious side effects.

Why does it matter to me?

Side effects are a common cause for patients to stop following their doctor's instructions and complete their treatment which could lead to further serious problems. Reporting suspected adverse reactions thus offers the opportunity to identify and further investigate unknown or poorly described side effects; it also encourages dialogue between patients and health care professionals. This is of paramount importance to help ensure the safe use of medicines.

Telling your doctor about side effects will make drug use safer for everyone. The information you provide contributes to improving the quality of medicines and protecting health.

What to do?

Next time you take your medicine, pay attention to the possible side effects. If you suspect that you have experienced an adverse drug reaction, write it down and talk to your doctor about the symptoms. It is very important that you together discuss about the measures that you should take.

Where to go?

If you are experiencing side effects, get in touch with your health care provider. Your doctor has the responsibility to report adverse reactions to your country's national pharmacovigilance centre as part of the WHO Programme for International Drug Monitoring. In many countries patients and consumers are encouraged to report adverse drug reactions directly. Visit the website of the National Regulatory Authority for Medicines or the National Centre for Pharmacovigilance for more information, or ask you health care provider.

What happens next?

The national centre for pharmacovigilance evaluates the report to identify potential risks. Together with the relevant authority, it can then take measures to minimize this risk if deemed appropriate. Countries participating in the WHO Programme for International Drug Monitoring then forward the reports to **VigiBase**, the WHO global database of reported suspected adverse reactions maintained by Uppsala Monitoring Centre (UMC) since 1978.

VigiBase is an important reference source with over 19 million reports which go back to 1968. It contains reports of suspected relationships between a drug and an adverse reaction but it is crucial to understand that no causal relation has been confirmed.

All reports are anonymous; the patients, healthcare professionals or institutions involved cannot be identified in VigiBase. UMC regularly screens the uploaded data to better identify, characterize and understand the potential risks of medicines. It then shares the findings with national centres, the WHO and the public via various channels.

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