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1. INTRODUCTION

This guidance relates to the covert administration of medicines to all adult patients over the age of 18, who are unable to give informed consent to treatment and refuse to take tablets, capsules or liquid preparations when offered openly to them.

Adult patients with capacity are entitled to decline treatment, even when it would clearly benefit their health.

Where a patient is subject to detention and treatment under the Mental Health Act (1983), psychotropic medicines can be prescribed and administered without consent. Any administration of any medicines covertly, must only be carried out within the scope of this guideline.

In cases where an adult who lacks mental capacity to consent declines medication that would clearly benefit their health, they may be administered medication covertly only in exceptional circumstances as outlined in these *guidelines*

In addition consideration should also be given to their:

- ◆ Wishes and beliefs while they had mental capacity, including if they have clearly indicated in the past, while they had capacity, that they would refuse treatment in certain circumstances (an 'advance refusal')
- ◆ Current wishes
- ◆ General well-being and their spiritual and religious welfare
- ◆ Previously expressed wishes (including those included in any advance statement or lasting power of attorney for health and wellbeing)

Where there is insufficient knowledge of the patient when they had mental capacity, then the advice of relatives, carers and friends should be sought.

The Royal College of Psychiatrists has also issued a statement on the covert administration of medicine

All professionals involved in the covert administration of medicines and /or the decisions to treat covertly should consider advice from their profession and the underlying principles of The Mental Capacity Act 2005.

2. SCOPE

This guideline applies to all employees of the Trust who provide direct care to service users including those employed via partnership arrangements and applies to the covert administration of any medicines to all patients

3. PROCEDURES

3.1. Identifying patients

Patients who have been assessed to not have mental capacity and refuse medication may be considered for the covert administration in the following circumstances

- To prevent serious deterioration in either physical or mental health
- To reduce the risk of harm to self and others
- To treat physical or mental health conditions

3.2. Decision making process

- A formal mental capacity assessment must be undertaken specifically assessing the individuals capacity to make decisions about medication
 - Only patients who are deemed not to have mental capacity may be administered medicines covertly
 - Before any decision to administer medicines covertly, all reasonable steps must be explored to deliver the least restrictive option
 - The decision to administer medicines covertly must be made within a best interests process by an identified decision maker
 - A multi-disciplinary team (MDT) discussion must be held. Those involved in the discussion must be:
 - Prescriber
 - Pharmacist
 - Nurse
 - Patient representation (friends/family/IMCA or through lasting power of attorney)
- Others may be involved in the decision when appropriate
- Community Psychiatric Nurse/ Keyworker
 - Residential home staff
 - Allied professional involved in the individuals' care

The decision maker must consider Deprivation of Liberty responsibilities if the affects or side effects of the medicines constitute a restrictive intervention e.g. a chemical restraint and seek the necessary authorisation

- In an emergency situation a joint decision can be made by the prescriber and nurse in charge and appropriate documentation completed. All efforts must be made to communicate with significant others in particular those holding any Lasting Power of Attorney for Health and Wellbeing. This must be reviewed by the MDT at the earliest opportunity
- Practitioners must never make unilateral decisions to administer medicines covertly

3.3. Suitability of medicines for covert administration of medicines

- Advice should be obtained on suitable methods of administration of medicines covertly by providing a list of currently prescribed medicines to the Medicines Information Service HNF-TR.MedicinesInformation@nhs.net
- Medicines must only be administered covertly in accordance with the advice from Medicines Information unless alternative methods have been specifically discussed with the Specialist Pharmacist responsible for Older People and are clearly documented

3.4. Documentation

- The decision to administer medicines covertly must be recorded in the patients' notes including the completion of appropriate forms. These may include Assessment of Mental Capacity, best interest discussion and a record of agreed outcomes
- The care plan for the patient must clearly outline the use of covert administration, methods by which medicines may be administered covertly, any precautions and all other relevant information
- A copy of the advice from the Medicines Information Service should be kept in the patients notes and with the patients medicines administration record (MAR) card
- The MAR chart must be endorsed by the prescriber to indicate which medicines may be administered covertly using the additional instructions box
- The relevant variant code must be recorded on the MAR chart to indicate the covert administration or partial covert administration of medicines along with the administering practitioner's initials. Where partial administration has taken place, a record of the approximate amount must be recorded

3.5. Administration process

- Any precautions advised by Medicines Information or the Specialist Pharmacist must be adhered to when preparing medicines for covert administration to avoid inadvertent exposure of the individuals involved in preparation and administration
- When possible medicines administered covertly by disguising in food or drink should be mixed in the smallest portion of food or liquid as possible, rather than a full meal or drink
- If tablets are to be crushed, a pill crusher designed for this purpose should usually be used; alternatively a pestle & mortar or 2 metal spoons may be used if necessary. Pill crushers should be washed thoroughly after use to prevent contamination.
- Crushing tablets or opening capsules to empty contents should only be done immediately prior to administration
- Any medicines prepared for covertly administration must be clearly identified as such and indicate the patient they are intended for
- When possible patients should be observed during the administration process, unless specific risk assessment has been undertaken and care planned for

- Where the covert administration of medicines is delegated the nurse retains full clinical responsibility and professional accountability throughout, and must ensure any health care support worker involved in assisting administration is competent to undertake the task
- The covert administration of controlled drugs must only be delegated to health care support workers under direct supervision
- Any waste materials resulting from for covert administration must always be considered as medicines and must be disposed of as such in accordance with the Safe and Secure Handling of Medicines Procedure

3.6. Reviewing covert administration of medicines

- Review of the need to administer medicines covertly should be regularly reviewed by the MDT
- The effectiveness of any medicine administered covertly must be reviewed by the MDT on a regular basis and adjustments made to account for any impact the method is having on treatment.
- The date when the covert administration of medicines are reviewed must be documented in the patients notes, along with the date the next review is due
- When appropriate information and encouragement should be provided to the patient in order to re-establish overt administration if possible

4. REFERENCES/DEFINITIONS

Royal College of Psychiatrists- statement on covert administration of medicines
<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/pdf/covertmedicine.full.pdf>

Covert Administration
Common items used in Older Adults Mental Health Wards

<u>Medicine</u>	<u>Recommendation</u>
Amlodipine	Most tablet brands will disperse in water easily in one to five minutes. The tablets can also be crushed and added to soft food for administration, especially sweet foods. Give ASAP as the drug is light sensitive.
Atorvastatin	The tablets can be crushed and mixed with water for administration, also added to soft food. Atorvastatin tablets are not very soluble and a residue may be left, so take care to ensure the complete dose is administered. Give immediately as the drug is light sensitive. ¹ Avoid grapefruit juice. ^{2,3}
Aripiprazole	Use the orodispersible tablets by preparing as per general advice stated below. The absorption is not affected by food and thus aripiprazole can be given with or without meals. ^{1,2,3}
Bisoprolol	The tablets can be crushed finely and mixed with water for administration. The lower strength tablets will disperse in one to five minutes without crushing. The higher strength tablets should be crushed before mixing with water. Different brands may disperse at different rates. ¹ Also see further information below regarding preparing tablets.
Clopidogrel	The tablets can be dispersed in water for administration. Most brands disperse in one to five minutes without crushing. ¹ Also see further information below regarding preparing tablets.
Donepezil	Use donepezil orodispersible tablets and add to soft food (adding a very small amount of water to allow for it to dissolve with moisture). The issue might be the flavour in terms of food choice, as they are peppermint flavoured. Alternatively, the tablet can be placed in water or other drinks as far as they are not too hot or fizzy. Also see further information below regarding preparing dispersible tablets. If absolutely necessary, regular tablets could be crushed but the taste is very bitter, and would be difficult to mask.
Fluoxetine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The dispersible tablet (Olena Brand) can be dispersed in half a glass of water just before taking the dose. Do not crush or chew the tablets. Olena Fluoxetine dispersible tablets have a peppermint flavour and can be dispersed also in small amount of water and add to soft food but the flavour would be noticeable ○ Fluoxetine capsules can be opened and disperse in a small amount of water and add to soft food, there's no flavour to it, but I would recommend to add to sweet soft food such as yogurt, ice-cream, puddings, honey ○ The liquid can also be used in a similar fashion, however it also has a peppermint flavour

Furosemide	Use the oral solution. Mix with water (has a cherry flavour). ¹ Also see further information below regarding preparing liquid preparations. Alternatively, use a crushed tablet and administer with yogurt, jam, honey, apple puree etc ¹ . Also see further information below regarding preparing tablets.
Haloperidol	Oral solution is available for use. ¹ Also see further information below regarding preparing liquid preparations.
Lactulose	Can be mixed with water, fruit juice or with meals for administration. ⁴
Laxido	Each sachet should be dissolved in 125mL water. There is none or very limited information about interactions with food, therefore you may consider adding fruit juice of the same flavour to enhance and make more palatable. ⁴ Also note: There are reports of Movicol being flavoured with cordials or squashes, and less frequently with milk or tea. The manufacturers specifically recommend against reconstitution with fizzy drinks as there is a risk of interaction between macrogols and phosphoric acid. ⁴
Lansoprazole	<p>Lansoprazole: The contents of a capsule may be sprinkled on a tablespoonful of a suitable soft food (pudding, cottage cheese, yogurt, strained pears) and ingested immediately, can also be mixed with apple, orange, or tomato juice and consumed. Also see further information below regarding preparing capsules.</p> <p>Lansoprazole dispersible (depends on the manufacturer): can be dispersed in a small amount of water and add to soft food (strawberry yogurt or ice-cream are good options) or disguise in an strawberry flavoured water</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mylan = Strawberry ○ Ranbaxy: Tropical Flavour ○ Lupin: Strawberry ○ Pfizer (zoton astab): Strawberry
Lorazepam	The tablets can be crushed and mixed with water for administration. Without crushing they disperse in one to five minutes and can be mixed with semisolid foods or cold drinks that are not fizzy or too hot. Do not mix with caffeine or grapefruit juice containing drinks. ¹ Also see further information below regarding preparing tablets.

Memantine	Use the oral drops or oral solution. The drops can be diluted in water to aid administration if necessary.
Memantine	Oral solution is available; there is no indication that absorption will be reduced by any kind of food. The solution should be taken with water and can be taken with or without food. It shouldn't have any flavour other than sweetener. There is no information regarding mixing with other liquids, but considering that no interaction has been reported with any food, it shouldn't be a problem mixing with cold drinks that are not fizzy or too hot, and are to be consumed in a short period of time. ¹ Also see further information below regarding preparing liquid preparations. The tablets can be crushed and dispersed in water for administration. Crush well as they are film-coated. ¹
Metformin	Modified release tablets are not suitable for crushing. ¹ Please inform the prescriber to review the formulation and dose. Standard tablets can be crushed, but the bioavailability of metformin is reduced by food (the absorption for metformin is reduced by around 40%), so it will be better to be given 30 minutes before or 2 hours after food in water, however if this is not feasible, mix with food. There is a solution available with peppermint flavour.
Mirtazapine	Use the oral solution or the orodispersible tablet, as the standard tablet, when crushed, has a bitter taste and an anaesthetic effect on the mouth. The dispersible tablet has orange taste so it can be mixed with orange juice, ice cream, jam.
Nitrofurantoin	Use the liquid formulation, and shake well before use. It has an apricot flavour so mixed with yogurt; ice-cream or other sweet desserts would be the most efficient way to mask the favour. It could also be mixed with water or milk but the flavour would be quite obvious. <u>Do NOT crush the tablets as nitrofurantoin is an irritant.</u>
Olanzapine	Dispersible tablets can be placed on the tongue or dispersed in water, orange juice, apple juice, milk, or coffee
Paracetamol	Use soluble tablets or liquid formulations available in different flavours, can be mixed with water or soft food, particularly syrup formulations with yogurt. ⁴
Paracetamol	Use soluble tablets or liquid formulations available in different flavours, can be mixed with water or soft food, particularly syrup formulations with yogurt. ¹ Also see further information below regarding preparing dispersible tablets and liquid preparations.
Peptac	No specific data available regarding mixing with water or food as Peptac should be taken after meals.

Quetiapine	The IR tablets can be crushed and mixed with water for administration, or can also be added to soft food (e.g. yogurt). They taste bitter, so maybe add a bit of honey or jam to the yogurt.
Ramipril	You may open the Ramipril capsule and sprinkle the medicine into a half-cup of water, apple juice, or apple sauce. ¹ Also see further information below regarding preparing capsules.
Risperidone	No specific data available for generic film coated tablets, although the brand Risperdal® can be dispersed in water prior to administration. ⁵ The absorption is not affected by food and thus risperidone can be given with or without meals. ²
Sertraline	The tablets can be crushed and mixed with water or food. Crushed tablets have a bitter taste, and an anaesthetic effect on the tongue, so use with caution and take care with hot foods after administration. ¹ Also see further information below regarding preparing tablets.
Simvastatin	The tablets can be crushed and mixed with water for administration. Crush well as the drug is practically insoluble. Use immediately (light sensitive).
Sodium Valproate M/R (Epilim Chrono)	Modified release tablets are not suitable for crushing. ¹ Please inform the prescriber to review the formulation and dose, switch to liquid twice a day
Semi sodium Valproate (Depakote)	It will have to be switched to Epilim Liquid (200mg/5ml), as Depakote tablets won't dissolve, and cannot be crushed. An equivalent dose for 500mg of Depakote will be 600mg of Epilim, so as an example if the patient is taking 500mg Depakote twice a day, it will be equivalent to 600mg of Epilim twice a day, or 15ml of the liquid (200mg/5ml). It has a cherry flavour and can be mixed with water, but food can delay its absorption.
Trazodone	Oral solution available at high price. ⁵ Opening the capsules is not recommended but there are reports of this being done, and the content of the capsules tastes unpleasant. No specific data available on crushing trazodone tablets, therefore it is not recommended. ¹
Venlafaxine	Immediate release crushed tablets can be administered in jam for patients with swallowing difficulties. The modified-release capsules contain modified-release beads which can be emptied out and given in smooth food, e.g. yogurt, for patients with swallowing difficulties. The beads must be swallowed whole, therefore this method may not be appropriate for patients with limited understanding / impaired ability to follow instructions
Zopiclone	From the literature available, tablets are not suitable for crushing or dissolving. Consider changing to temazepam liquid or zolpidem, as zolpidem tablets that can be crushed and mixed with water for administration. ⁴ However, zopiclone has been crushed before within the trust and mixed with yogurt, honey, jam, etc... to good effect. ⁴

General Advice for Crushing Tablets

Tablets that can be crushed, crush with a pestle and mortar, tablet crusher, or two metal spoons. The crushed powder then can be added to 10-15mL of water and the solution should be mixed well (more water can be added if required). If pestle and mortar or tablet crusher is used rinse out them with distilled water and administer this solution to the patient also.¹

When crushing tablets:¹

- **DON'T** crush tablets in plastic containers as the drug may adhere to the plastic (unless it is a tablet crusher).
- **DON'T** use boiling water to dissolve tablets as it may affect bioavailability.
- **DON'T** leave oral medicines unattended in syringes.
- **DON'T** administer any medicine that you have not prepared yourself.

It is not recommended to crush several tablets at the same time; each tablet should be crushed and prepared separately.⁶

There is none or very limited information about above listed medication interactions with food. Therefore, the crushed tablet or the contents of the capsule can be mixed with soft or semisolid foods e.g. mash, jam, yogurt, which are not too hot, unless otherwise specified in the table above.⁴

General Advice for Mixing Solutions

There is none or very limited information about above listed medication interactions with food. Therefore, the solutions can be mixed with soft or semisolid foods e.g. mash, jam, yogurt, which are not too hot, unless otherwise specified in the table above.⁴

General Advice for Dispersible/Effervescent Tablets

There is none or very limited information about above listed medication interactions with food. Therefore, the prepared tablet can be mixed with soft or semisolid foods e.g. mash, jam, yogurt, which are not too hot, unless otherwise specified in the table above.⁴

General Advice for Preparing Hard Gelatine Capsules

1. Gently ease open the capsule to release the powder.
2. Tip the powder into a beaker - be sure to obtain all the powder.
3. Mix the powder with 15-30ml of distilled water.
4. Administer the solution to the patient.
5. Rinse the beaker with distilled water, and administer this also.²

Note: Please try and ensure the patient consumes the all food or drink prepared with the medicine so they receive the intended dose.