

# News from

---

Embargoed: 00:01 Monday, 10 September 2007

## HOSPITALS PUT ALLERGY PATIENTS AT RISK

Patients are being put at risk because some hospital doctors are not always following warning procedures over known drug allergies, new research launched at the British Pharmaceutical Conference (BPC) in Manchester shows.

A study by the University of Sunderland at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Gateshead, found that **less than half** of patients with a known drug allergy were issued with red wrist bands which warn hospital staff of patients' allergies.

The study looked at the standard of drug allergy recording and red alert wristband usage among in-patient wards at the hospital, and the results were compared to the hospital's Trust Drug Policy standards.\*

The results further showed that in **three quarters** of cases, patients' drug allergy status details were not recorded in their clinical notes or on their drug charts.

Drug allergies are a significant cause of avoidable adverse drug reactions among hospital in-patients each year. Pharmacist Andrew Husband, who led the research, said: "The solution is to increase awareness among hospital staff of the importance of this issue. Every member of a hospital multi-professional team is responsible for ensuring that drug allergy status procedures are followed."

"Pharmacists are experts in medicines and they have a significant role to play in supporting other health professionals to achieve the best possible healthcare outcomes for all patients, and avoid adverse drug reactions," Andrew said.

A separate study, also carried out by University of Sunderland at City Hospitals Sunderland, showed that the recording of allergy status was incomplete or sometimes overlooked or omitted. In nearly **40%** of patients with a known drug allergy the allergic reaction was not

recorded. In almost **80%** of cases where appropriate details were recorded, the entries were made by pharmacists, rather than doctors.

Dr Rachel Etherington, who led the research said: "These results demonstrate the crucial role of pharmacists within a multi-disciplinary team: pharmacists are uniquely placed to raise awareness of the importance of drug allergy recording. Details of drug allergies are recognised as key components of patients' records and pharmacists could potentially play a significant proactive role in achieving higher standards of allergy status recording."

"Allergic reactions to drugs can have life-threatening consequences and are estimated to prolong the hospital stay for **15%** of patients.<sup>1</sup>"

### **Ends**

#### **For media enquiries please contact:**

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain's Public Relations Unit:

Tel: 020 7572 2335 or 020 7572 2336

The British Pharmaceutical Conference Press Office (**September 10, 11 and 12 only**)

Tel: 0161 839 9170

Tel: 0161 839 9173

Tel: 0161 839 9164

Tel: 0161 832 2023

Tel: 0161 832 1090

Mobile: 07739 533 658

ISDN: 0161 833 4751

#### **Notes to Editors**

\* It is the responsibility of medical staff to record drug allergy status on the electronic prescribing system.

The British Pharmaceutical Conference - entitled "[The medicines maze: balancing risks and benefits](#)" - takes place from 10th to 12th September, 2007, at Manchester Central (formerly Manchester International Convention Centre). The theme of BPC 2007 is reflected throughout the programme, with keynote speeches and workshops addressing crucial technical and professional issues that are facing pharmacy today. The conference will showcase the latest

developments in pharmaceutical science and practice research and include discussion and debate led by expert speakers.

### **References**

1. Allergy – the unmet need: a blueprint for better patient care. Reports from the Royal College of Physicians. 2003.