


High Street Surgery
219 High Street
Hornchurch
Essex
RM11 3XT

17 August 2022

Graeme Irving
Acting Senior Coroner
East London Coroner's Service
Adult Learning College
127 Ripple Road
Barking IG11 7PB

Dear Mr Irving,

Re: Inquest Touching the Death of Mr Michael John Vince Regulation 28: Report to Prevent Future Deaths

Thank you for sending the Prevention of Future Deaths Report regarding the death of Mr Michael Vince, and providing me an opportunity to comment on the matters of concern raised.

Before responding, I would like to express my sincere condolences to the family of Mr Vince for their loss.

I have carefully considered the Report. Actions taken by myself and my practice in response to the concerns raised are described below.

Concern 1:

The NICE guidelines for Zopiclone indicate that it is a suitable medication for the short-term treatment of insomnia, it advises against prolonged use due to risk of tolerance and withdrawal symptoms. Mr Vince is said to have been prescribed Zopiclone for 20 years.

Concern 2:

No evidence exists to support that Mr Vince's GP or community mental health team meaningfully reviewed his prescription for Zopiclone.

Concern 4:

The frequency with which Mr Vince was administering his PRN Zopiclone was never monitored.

Response to Concerns 1, 2 and 4

In response to the above concerns, the following actions have been undertaken:

A. Clinical Audit of all patients prescribed Zopiclone over the past 2 years:

The report contains concerns as to the monitoring and review of Mr Vince's Zopiclone. In response, our practice determined to undertake a comprehensive audit and clinical review of all patients prescribed Zopiclone.

A review of practice records for all patients prescribed Zopiclone over the last 2 years was performed. A summary of the results is as follows:

- Acute or one-off prescription of Zopiclone – 22 patients
- Repeat prescription of Zopiclone – 16 patients

All patients currently taking Zopiclone were contacted for a structured medication review undertaken by myself. The review was guided by best practice guidelines for the prescribing of Zopiclone. The result of the medication reviews was that the majority of patients on repeat prescriptions had their repeat prescribing ended. Some patients were referred to the Trust's Mental Health Service for further review and management of their Zopiclone administration.

After the initial structured medication review, a second cycle review of patients on repeat Zopiclone prescriptions was undertaken. This showed that only 4 patients remained on repeat Zopiclone. Two of these patients are scheduled for further review, and two remain on long term Zopiclone and are scheduled for 6 monthly review.

B. Implementation of Z-Drug Protocol

I have drafted a local practice Protocol for Z-Drugs which has been implemented as at 29 July 2022. A copy of the Protocol is included with this letter.

The protocol was drafted following my review of best practice guidelines for the prescribing and management of patients on Zopiclone and other Z-Drug hypnotics. The protocol includes links to relevant NICE guidelines and a comprehensive resource pack produced by the Greater Manchester Medicines Management Group included as an appendix. It also includes a Good Sleep Guide to assist in advising patients with non-pharmaceutical methods to manage insomnia.

The policy requires regular review of patients prescribed Z-Drug hypnotics being a minimum of 4 weeks for newly prescribed patients, and at 6-monthly intervals for patients on long term treatment and after review by Mental Health Services.

C. Discussion and Education of Practice Staff

Meetings have been held with practice staff to alert them to the new protocol, and to advise them to refer all patients requesting repeat prescriptions of Z-Drugs to myself for medication review.

A notice has been placed in the practice waiting room for the information of patients regarding the practice's Z-Drug protocol.

We will continue to monitor the above actions in our regular practice meetings.

Concern 3:

Evidence of Mr Vince's dependence upon Zopiclone was not shared by his GP with the mental health trust.

Response to Concern 3

The North East London Foundation Trust (NELFT) Mental Health Service held a stakeholder meeting on 14 July 2022 to discuss the Coronial recommendations, as well as the issue of prescribing of Z-Drugs generally. The meeting included representatives from the NELFT medication safety team. I was invited and attended this meeting which was a very useful opportunity to discuss clinical collaboration with the Trust regarding patients on Z-Drug hypnotics.

At that meeting the importance of proper communication between local GP's, the NELFT Mental Health Team and other clinical services was discussed. It was agreed that review of hypnotics was the responsibility of the primary prescriber, but also the prescriptions should be reviewed by the Trust clinicians when in the scope of treatment provided by that clinician.

The Trust committed to undertaking a wider audit of Z-Drug prescribing within the NELFT localities which will be led by the Trust pharmacy services. They will also be developing a safe-prescribing training package and will include education of local GP's in their roll-out of this package.

For my part, I have commenced more proactive referral of patients who appear dependent upon Z-Drug hypnotics for review and advice by specialist NELFT Mental Health services. This has been assisted by the response of the NELFT to the Coronial recommendations and the discussion and collaboration that has resulted. My practice's Z-Drug Protocol includes a requirement for structured medication review for patients on long term Z-Drugs with mental health issues, and a requirement to notify the Mental Health Team for those patients who request additional Z drugs.

Thank you again for your referring your concerns regarding the care of Mr Vince. If you would like any further information regarding our response to the concerns, please contact me on email [REDACTED]

Yours Sincerely

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Enclosed: High Street Practice Z-Drug Protocol