

Grandiose Clozapine Dreams Hit a Sour Note in Remote Australia

Clinical Features:

A 49 year old Aboriginal male, from a remote community with a past medical history of treatment resistant schizophrenia, type 2 diabetes mellitus, substance induced brain injury and tardive dyskinesia.

Background:

Clozapine is a high-risk antipsychotic medication used for treatment resistant schizophrenia with serious rare side effects including neutropenia and agranulocytosis. This requires strict monitoring of white cell and neutrophil counts with weekly blood tests for first 18 weeks of therapy and monthly bloods thereafter. A remote clozapine pharmacy technician (RCPT) is responsible for facilitating clozapine management in Remote Communities.

Progress and Outcomes:

Clozapine was commenced in hospital following unsuccessful trials of various antipsychotics. The RCPT became involved in planning for discharge to the remote community. RCPT communicated with the remote community regarding prescription and monitoring requirements including recording of blood results in the electronic clozapine patient monitoring system.

Staffing pressures and flooding caused multiple delays in obtaining bloods and generating prescriptions, delaying medication supply. This resulted in several missed doses of clozapine within the first 18 weeks of treatment, resulting in hospital readmission for re-titration of clozapine.

Patient returned to the remote community post re-titration, however, discontinued treatment again one week later, resulting in hospital re-admission. After multiple re-admissions, patient recommenced clozapine in hospital. He remained in hospital awaiting local accommodation, as management in the remote community was deemed unsuitable.

Discussion and Conclusion:

Pharmacy teams play a crucial role in clozapine monitoring and management to prevent psychotic relapse. However, remote communities often require intensive support from multiple disciplines to maintain appropriate care. Despite efforts from pharmacy, challenges in medication access and management led to multiple lengthy re-admissions. Further resources are required to improve clozapine management in remote communities.

