

Opioid Adverse Drug Events (ADEs)

Bulletin Volume 1

Definitions:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): An adverse drug event (ADE) is when someone is harmed by a medicine.¹

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS): An injury resulting from drug-related medical interventions.²

Quick Facts about ADEs²:

- It is generally estimated that about **half** of ADEs are preventable.³
- Antidiabetic meds, anticoagulants/antiplatelet meds and opioids account for more than 50% of Medicare patient emergency department (ED) visits.³
- Each year, ADEs account for nearly **700,000 ED visits and 100,000 hospitalizations.**³
- Adverse Drug Reaction (ADR) Programs can be used to raise awareness of the risks associated with ADRs, identify ADRs that have occurred and reduce their risk of associated harm.

Common Effects of Opioid ADEs²:



Hallucinations or delusions



Confusion or dizziness



Falls



Lethargy/ somnolence or unresponsiveness



Decreased respiration or decreased blood pressure/heart rate



Constipation, abdominal pain or inability to urinate



Pharmacists Corner

Pharmacists have the knowledge and expertise needed to develop and organize comprehensive programs that monitor, report and evaluate ADEs.

TIP: Involve your consultant pharmacist in reporting and monitoring ADEs!

Occurrences that Could Point to an Opioid ADE²:

- Administration of naloxone
- Transfer to hospital
- Contact physician due to onset of new symptoms
- Use of a benzodiazepine
- Order for an abdominal x-ray
- Addition of a laxative or stool softener
- Loss of coordination
- Addition of a new medication
- Removal of a medication

¹ https://www.cdc.gov/medicationsafety/adult_adversedrugsafety.html

² <https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Provider-Enrollment-and-Certification/QAPI/Downloads/Adverse-Drug-Event-Trigger-Tool.pdf>

³ <https://psnet.ahrq.gov/primer/medication-errors-and-adverse-drug-events>