A guide for physicians

Prescribing addictive medicines



Treatment with addictive medicines is not without risk and should not be first choice. Consider if it is possible to avoid addictive medicines and prescribe other drugs or initiate non-pharmacological interventions instead.

Key points

Considerations before prescribing

Do the expected benefits outweigh the potential adverse effects of the drug?

Is the patient at particular risk of developing dependence or side effects, e.g. if the patient:

- Is elderly
- Is at risk for falls
- Has dementia
- Has reduced lung or kidney function
- Has a history of substance abuse
- Is already taking addictive medicines

What is the patient's current medication status?

Can the treatment affect the patient's ability to perform daily functions, e.g. driving or operating machinery?

When prescribing addictive medicines

As a general rule, the patient must be physically present when you prescribe addictive medicines.

Choose a drug based on its individual effect on the patient's symptoms, metabolism, and potential interactions with other medications.

Create a treatment plan that includes goals, duration, and follow-up plan. The patient should be involved in the process, but the final clinical decision rests with you as the physician.

The treatment should be of the shortest possible duration.

Inform the patient about the risk of addiction and common and/or serious side effects – and obtain informed consent.

Avoid prescribing addictive medicines to yourself or your relatives.

When you renew prescriptions

As a general rule, the patient must be physically present every time a prescription for addictive medicines is renewed.

As the treating physician, you are responsible for reevaluating the treatment plan at each renewal. Inform the patient of how prescriptions can be renewed if you are unavailable, e.g. during holidays. Ensure that a clear treatment plan is in place during transitions of care.

When treatment is no longer indicated, establish a tapering plan and offer necessary medical and psychosocial support.

This must be included in the patient record

- Indication for treatment
- Treatment plan
- Expected benefits
- Dose and duration
- Anticipated side effects
- Information given to the patient
- Agreements with the patient
- The patient's consent
- Medical driving ban

Further reading

Scan the QR code or visit stps.dk/asl.

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