Learning Portal Lite: **Adverse reactions**

This is a one-page summary; see the full version online

Definition

An ADR is an unintended harmful or potentially harmful reaction to a medicine used at normal clinical doses.

Causality

A helpful strategy in deciding whether a reaction is drug-related is to use TRIP:

- What is the **T**iming of the reaction compared to the start dates of medicines?
- When a potentially causative medicine is stopped does the patient **R**ecover?
- What **I**ndependent evidence is there for a drug-related effect? (e.g. blood tests)
- Is the reaction a **P**redictable or known reaction of the drug concerned?

Managing ADRs

It's important for pharmacists to offer practical clinical advice on ADR management, not simply to identify side effects and offending medicines.

For **non-dose-related reactions**, such as allergy, the strategy is usually to stop the medicine and choose a different treatment (drug or non-drug). This approach is used in managing many **dose-related reactions** too, where alternative approaches may include continuing the drug and treating the ADR, or reducing the dose.

Talking to patients

Patients should know what types of side effects can be caused by their medicines, how likely they are to be affected, and what to do if they think they have an ADR. If an ADR is identified, you should explain in clear terms which medicine is responsible, how the reaction is being managed, and the implications for the patient's future care.

Reporting to MHRA

Pharmacists must understand how professionals and patients can report ADRs to the MHRA and the criteria for doing so.

Questions to ask

When advising about an ADR, your questions should include:

- What is the nature of the ADR?
- Which medicines were started just before the reaction happened?
- Which alternative medicines could be used?

Information sources

These include SmPCs, Martindale, AHFS Drug Information, Drugdex and Lexicomp.