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Dr Falk/Guts UK Awards 2023

PHARMACIST RECOGNITION PRIZE WINNER:

Ms Rebecca Turley

PROJECT:

Pharmacist-led Interventions to Improve Compliance with Hepatitis B Screening Prior to Starting Rituximab



Ms Turley is a Clinical Pharmacist, Gastroenterology and Hepatology at Queens Hospital, Romford, Essex.

Ms Turley explains:

'Rituximab is a biologic therapy often used to treat, amongst other conditions, auto-immune diseases. However, it carries a known risk of hepatitis B reactivation (HBVr) and when I started in my new role here, I inherited an audit which had been triggered by a patient fatality due to HBVr within the Trust.

'The aim of the audit was to measure compliance to the recommendations of the MHRA Drug Safety Update in 2013 regarding the potentially fatal risk of HBVr associated with rituximab.

'All patients who had been supplied rituximab between 2013 and 2018 were reviewed and their screening status checked. The initial audit showed that only 60% of patients were screened for a current HBV infection (HBsAg) prior to starting rituximab but, and more concerning, only 14% were screened for a past infection (anti-HBcore) prior to starting rituximab. Only 17% of those with positive serology were referred to hepatology.

'I felt very passionately about this unacceptable risk being faced by some patients, and therefore developed and put several pharmacist-led interventions into place.

'These included providing feedback from the audit to the key divisions who prescribe rituximab (rheumatology and haematology/oncology) and teaching to Gastroenterology and Pharmacy to improve vigilance around hepatitis B reactivation.

'I developed a local HBVr guideline to guide clinicians on the correct pathway whilst ensuring that referrals and queries regarding HBVr were directed to me. This provided the teams with easier access to hepatology advice, a prompt response to their query and improved the visibility of the hepatology team within the hospital.

'I also created space in the pharmacist-led clinics to review all patients who are started on antivirals to prevent HBVr to ensure that they are reviewed in a timely manner and monitored appropriately.

'Following this work, I recently carried out a re-audit of the original, this time reviewing all patients who had been supplied rituximab in 2022. My re-audit shows that almost 100% of this cohort of patients had been screened for both HBsAg and anti-HBcore prior to starting rituximab, and all but one with positive serology were referred to hepatology. This clearly demonstrates the positive and lasting impact of the interventions that I put into place and therefore the improvement to patient safety.'

Ms Turley's Project Manager, Lead Pharmacist, Gastroenterology Mr Stuart Hill comments:

'Rebecca has come from a position of relatively little experience in hepatology, but with obvious skill, drive and enthusiasm, in just over a year she has turned that into a position of authority, trust and expertise within the hepatology MDT and the Trust. In doing so, she has significantly improved patient safety and, potentially, also the perception and standing of clinical pharmacy within the linked teams.

'Her work has resulted in a pragmatic and comprehensive guideline, subsequently approved by the Trust and she is now collaborating on a draft for national guidelines.'

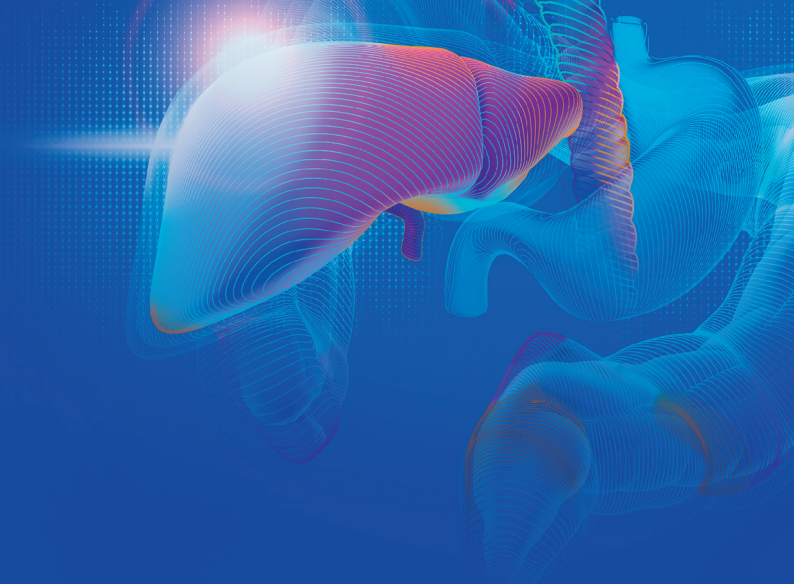
Ms Turley states:

'It is very rewarding to see the improvement in engagement with hepatitis B screening from clinicians, and the clear impact this has on improving patient safety. It's great to be recognised by the Dr Falk/ Guts UK award for all the work that I have put into this, especially as I had to learn about hepatitis B and reactivation as I went along.

'Ultimately, I aim to become a consultant pharmacist in Hepatology and this award can help to support my portfolio.'



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