**Prescribing tip for actioning by practice**

**EMIS Web Protocol – Lithium**

Lithium is used in the treatment of mental health conditions such as bipolar disorder and mania. Lithium is mainly prescribed and monitored in Primary Care (under a Shared Care Agreement) but is sometimes retained by the Mental Health Trust (LSCFT).



**Please ensure information regarding lithium is added to the EMIS record for each patient; benefits include enhancing patient safety and minimising the following potential risks:**

* Inadvertent co-prescribing of interacting medications
* The potential to miss side effects or not attribute them to lithium therapy
* Lithium being missed on admission if admitted to another care setting

Following on from a local serious incident (where a patient with lithium levels that exceeded the range considered to be safe and therapeutic, was issued with a further prescription for lithium) the Medicines Optimisation Team has collaborated with LSCFT and IT colleagues to produce a lithium prescribing safety protocol. The protocol aims to remind prescribers to check that lithium levels are **in range** and **up to date** prior to issuing any further prescriptions.

**THIS PATIENT IS TAKING LITHIUM**

**!!! High risk medicine !!!**

**Prior to issuing a prescription for lithium, please review:**

* **Lithium toxicity can be fatal. Check for a level in the previous**

**3-6 months (see shared care guidelines for those requiring 3**

**monthly monitoring)**

* **Target levels are usually within the range 0.4mmol/L – 1.0mmol/L**
* **Lithium toxicity reliably occurs at serum lithium concentrations of ≥1.5mmol/L, though may occur with a normal lithium level**
* **Toxic effects can be neurological, renal, cardiovascular and gastro-intestinal**

**If toxicity is suspected:**

* **Withold lithium**
* **Complete an urgent lithium level and U&Es**
* **Seek specialist advice, i.e. A&E, if clinically urgent, and mental health services**

**For further advice on managing out of range lithium levels, see the shared care guidelines**

**Ensure routine monitoring is completed as documented in the shared care guidelines**

**The Medicines Optimisation Team will work with all practices to install the protocol on to the EMIS web clinical system unless otherwise advised.**