Urgent treatment advice: Clozapine and Covid-19

There have been two reported cases where service users taking clozapine have reported symptoms of Covid-19 and have not had urgent blood samples taken to exclude neutropenia.

Clozapine is an atypical antipsychotic used for treatment resistant schizophrenia. We have about 400 service users prescribed clozapine in the Trust. A rare but serious side effect of clozapine is neutropenia, which can cause sepsis, and can quickly lead to death if not detected and treated. The early signs and symptoms of neutropenia and sepsis include sore throat, fever and sweating.

The symptoms of neutropenia are indistinguishable from a possible Covid-19 infection. In these cases, the service user must have a Full Blood Count (FBC) to exclude neutropenia.

If any clozapine service user makes contact with suspected symptoms of either neutropenia or Covid-19, you must:

- Arrange for an **urgent** Full Blood Count (FBC) **on the day of the initial report** – do not delay
  - In working hours, usually a nurse or phlebotomist from the local clozapine clinic will attend the service user wearing PPE as per Trust advice
  - Out of working hours
    - in Knowsley and St Helens, Halton and Warrington, attend A&E urgently for an FBC
    - in Wigan and Leigh, ring Hospital at Home, 01942 822 643 staff will arrange a home visit for testing
- Follow up
  - Ensure you obtain a copy of the results and arrange necessary actions
  - Arrange regular follow-up while symptomatic – agree actions with the MDT
- Think Sepsis
  - [nww.5boroughspartnership.nhs.uk/who-what-where/sepsis-awareness](nww.5boroughspartnership.nhs.uk/who-what-where/sepsis-awareness)
  - Consider presenting symptoms and refer to A&E if clinically indicated or neutropenia is suspected
- Routinely, enquire whether the service user:
  - is isolating or not?
    - Once they display symptoms, they must self-isolate at home along with all family members, as per national advice
  - Is considered in a vulnerable or shielding group for other reasons
  - Has had contact with anyone with a confirmed diagnosis of Covid-19?
- Document the report & all your actions on a RiO
Any questions or comments, contact your locality pharmacist or
graham.newton@nwbh.nhs.uk or 07768 746 341