

# Medication Morsels: Ten Pharmacology Tips & Tricks

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- 1 Steroids given to lymphoma patients** can cause the tumour to become PET negative, making radiotherapy planning more difficult.
- 2** Half the NHS seems to be running on **SSRIs**, but did you know **they can cause akathisia** (and that the severity of akathisia can be measured using the **Barnes Akathisia Rating Scale (BARS)**)?
- 3** Everyone knows that **clozapine** can cause **potentially fatal neutropenia & agranulocytosis** (NNH=59), so patients on clozapine with flu-like symptoms, sore throats or fever need an urgent FBC (as well as a Covid test!) - but did you know **clozapine is also associated with bowel infarction**?
- 4** **Nitrofurantoin** can cause **two types of drug-induced pneumonitis**, seen as interstitial lung disease on chest CT. Acute can start within 2/52 of commencing the drug, chronic might be seen in patients long term UTI prophylaxis.
- 5** Hands up who recalls that liquorice/licorice can cause hypokalaemia? Now keep your hand up if you also know that **liquorice can increase the plasma concentration of steroids...**
- 6** **Beta-blockers** can cause wacky dreams (which can be very unpleasant), but they can also cause hallucinations.
- 7** There's an increased risk of **rash with amoxicillin in patients with CMV, ALL, and CLL** - not just the EBV (i.e. glandular fever) we all learned about as medical students... although the rash-with-EBV thing turns out to be ampicillin rather than amoxycillin!
- 8** Another antibiotic often used long-term is **azithromycin** (although NICE say there's not that much evidence for using it in non-CF bronchiectasis). **Patients should have a hearing test, and 12-lead ECG, prior to commencing long courses of azithromycin.** If hearing loss does occur, apparently it should return after stopping treatment.
- 9** Watch out for **antihistamines increasing anticholinergic burden**, especially in the elderly - it's not just chlorphenamine you need to look out for, **cetirizine can be a culprit** too! Don't forget to ask about OTC drugs. Whilst thinking about antihistamines, did you know you need to **avoid apple or orange juice for 1-2 hours before, and 4 hours after, taking fexofenadine?** They reduce its bioavailability by up to 70% by inhibiting intestinal OATP1A2 inhibitors. It's not just grapefruit juice that can cause mischief!
- 10** And another drug interaction to finish with: **fluoxetine reduces the efficacy of codeine.** About 10% of codeine undergoes metabolism by cytochrome 2D6 to become morphine, and fluoxetine inhibits CYP2D6.
- These snippets are things I have learned, taught, or been reminded of in the past few months, a mixture of case-based learning, #MedTwitter, and colleagues.
  - Special thanks to @Existential\_Doc, Karen Fearon, Helen Kerr, Amie Bain, @drbillgibson, @DrRJWebb, and the Facebook groups One F\*cking Health F\*cking Advice & Physician Women Equestrians (both of which are superb sources of effortless CPD!).
  - This is #FOAMed - please do share it!

# Medication Morsels II

## Pharmacology Tips & Tricks

**The Twitter Edit**



- Yesterday evening, I launched the latest in my “Snippets” series of things-I’ve-learned-or-had-forgotten-I-once-knew.
- There’s been a fantastic response on Twitter, and some brilliant extra learning coming of it... here’s a selection. Sorry I can’t fit more in!
- I’ll add this to the PDF of the original, both with embedded links and available at [www.lindadykes.org/downloads](http://www.lindadykes.org/downloads). It’s all #FOAMed!

### I said...

### Twitter added...

**Steroids given to lymphoma patients** can cause the tumour to become PET negative, making radiotherapy planning more difficult.

- Steroids given to CNH lymphoma can ghost the tumour and result in negative brain biopsy - @saspist

Half the NHS seems to be running on **SSRIs**, but did you know **they can cause akathisia** (and that the severity of akathisia can be measured using the **Barnes Akathisia Rating Scale (BARS)**)?

- Lots of drugs interact with SSRIs precipitating unpleasant and sometimes dangerous serotonin syndrome. Tramadol key suspect, but several others. Also, SSRI side effects are horrible and patients reporting them are not infrequently patronised or gaslighted - @saspist  
- All SSRIs are a bunch of things, really - @bobfunn

Hands up who recalls that liquorice/licorice can cause hypokalaemia? Now keep your hand up if you also know that **liquorice can increase the plasma concentration of steroids...**

- Well of course it is... it's because steroid (cortisol) concentration increases that you get hypokalaemia! Cortisol is a mineralocorticoid if you give it half a chance! - @endo\_kerri [anyone else going “oh yeah... now you point that out... Or maybe just me?]

Everyone knows that **clozapine** can cause **potentially fatal neutropenia & agranulocytosis** (NNH=59), so patients on clozapine with flu-like symptoms, sore throats or fever need an urgent FBC (as well as a Covid test!) - but did you know **clozapine is also associated with bowel infarction**?

- My experience has been that the non-haematological effects (severe constipation/pseudo obstruction, myocarditis, seizures due to toxicity post quitting smoking and of course the significant weight gain) cause far more issues in practice - @cjbroadhead  
- Clozapine: constipation due to reduced gut motility is a red flag too, can lead to bowel obstruction. Porirua Protocol used to reduce constipation. - @antongyan  
- Clozapine can cause urinary incontinence and bladder pain as well... - @drbillgibson

There’s an increased risk of **rash with amoxicillin in patients with CMV, ALL, and CLL** - not just the EBV (i.e. glandular fever) we all learned about as medical students...

Although... no evidence of rash with amoxicillin and EBV... ampicillin only! - @DrRJWebb