

OET Case Notes

Pharmacy · Beginner · Discharge letter · to Patient

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Pharmacy — Discharge Medication Advice for a Patient Starting Metformin

THE CASE NOTES

Patient: Mrs Fatima Hassan, 54 years old; new diagnosis: type 2 diabetes mellitus

New medication: Metformin 500 mg once daily with morning meal; to increase to 500 mg twice daily after 2 weeks if tolerated

Common side effects: Nausea, diarrhoea, stomach upset — take with food to reduce these; usually improve within 2–3 weeks

Important safety note: Stop metformin and contact GP immediately if she is scheduled for a contrast CT scan (iodinated contrast interaction risk) or feels very unwell with vomiting (dehydration risk — lactic acidosis)

Monitoring: Fasting blood glucose target 4–7 mmol/L; HbA1c check with GP in 3 months; renal function (eGFR) checked by GP before starting (normal)

Diet: GP-led dietary advice already given; patient has dietitian referral pending; pharmacist reinforces: reduce refined carbohydrates and sugary drinks

Task: Write a discharge advice letter to Mrs Hassan explaining how to take her metformin, what side effects to expect, and what to watch out for.

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WHAT TO INCLUDE

+ Take metformin with food and the dose escalation plan

Taking with food is the key instruction that prevents the side effects most likely to cause the patient to stop the medication. The dose escalation — 500 mg once daily for 2 weeks, then twice daily — is clinically important; patients often miss the step-up.

+ The CT scan and vomiting warnings — when to stop and contact the GP

These are the two pharmacist-specific safety nets for metformin. Both are conditions where continuing the medication is hazardous but a patient would not know to stop.

+ The 3-month HbA1c check with the GP

The patient needs to know monitoring is ongoing — this is not a take-it-and-forget prescription. Naming the follow-up builds adherence.

WHAT TO LEAVE OUT

– A full explanation of how type 2 diabetes causes high blood sugar

This was covered by the GP at diagnosis. One brief sentence ('your new tablet helps your body use insulin more effectively') is enough before moving to the instructions.

– The dietitian referral timeline

An administrative fact outside the pharmacist's scope. State briefly that dietary advice is part of the management plan; the appointment date is not your information to give.

CRITERION IN FOCUS · LANGUAGE

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A beginner pharmacy advice letter is an ideal Language assessment opportunity — the test is whether medical information has been accurately translated into plain, respectful patient language. 'Metformin reduces hepatic gluconeogenesis' must become 'the tablet helps your body manage blood sugar more effectively'. 'Lactic acidosis' must become 'a rare but serious condition that can happen if you become dehydrated — stop the tablet and call your GP'. Accurate clinical meaning, plain words.

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