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DRUG SAFETY MONITORING IN NORTHERN PROVINCES OF ZAMBIA

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INTRODUCTION

The Copperbelt University Health Services (CBU Health) has been designated by the Pharmaceutical Regulatory Authority (PRA) as its agent for coordinating pharmacovigilance in Copperbelt, Luapula, Northern, North Western and Western Provinces. CBU Health's mandate includes stimulating the reporting of adverse drug reactions (ADRs) as well collecting and collating ADR reports from health institutions in the five provinces. This report covers our experiences from May 2008.

METHODOLOGY

Beginning in early May this year, CBU Health has been visiting on a monthly basis health institutions in the study areas. Activities include holding discussions with health workers, distribution of ADR forms and collection of ADR reports. Once collected these reports are entered into the ADR Register at CBU Health and thereafter causality assessment is done. A report is then prepared for the PRA on quarterly basis. At the PRA, serious ADRs are noted and recommendations made to the Ministry of Health.

RESULTS

Hundred and fifty (150) ADRs have been collected between May – December, 2010. These reports were obtained from twenty-one (21) institutions in the Copperbelt. The reports have all been documented and assessed using the WHO Causality Method. Most of the ADRs reports were caused by antiretroviral drugs (ARVs) and some by anti-malarial drugs like Artemether/Lumefantrine – Coartem®. Fifty reports were sent to the Uppsala Monitoring Centre Vigiflow for further analysis.

CONCLUSION

Pharmacovigilance is the science relating to the detection, assessment, understanding and prevention of the adverse effects of drugs. It is an important public health specialty as drug safety awareness can lead to better patient outcomes and reduction in drug related morbidity. Our results show that pharmacovigilance is becoming an integral part of clinical care in Zambia for patient safety.