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How is the database of medicines suitable for older people created?

Construction of the Meds75+ database produced by Fimea is a carefully planned process ending with consensus among pharmacotherapy experts concerning the suitability of a medicine for people aged 75 or over.

What is Meds75+?

Meds75+ guides the selection of medicines suitable for people over the age of 75. The purpose of the database is to support clinical decision-making on the pharmacotherapy of older patients and to improve medication safety in primary healthcare.

The continuously updated Meds75+ database contains classifications (A-D) and recommendations concerning the suitability of 450-500 medicinal substances or their combinations for older adults. It is primarily intended for use by healthcare professionals. However, the information is available to everyone free of charge through Fimea's Medicine Search, which means that medicine users and their family members can also check the recommendations for specific medicinal substances.

How are the medicines included in Meds75+ selected?

Medicinal substances used in primary health care that have at least 500 users per year in the population aged 75 or over are included in the Meds75+ database. The number of people using individual medicinal substances may decrease to less than 500 over the years. However, these are often kept in the Meds75+ database.

Other medicines may also be included in Meds75+ based on a decision by the expert working group. Medicines can also be added following a justified proposal by Meds75+ users.

The number of medicine users is reviewed once a year based on purchases of medicines by the National Prescription Centre. The new medicines identified in the review will be discussed at the Meds75+ working group meeting as soon as possible, within six months at the latest.

What are the grounds for a decision on the classification and recommendation of a medicine?

The medicinal substance classification (A, B, C, D) describes the suitability of the medicinal substance for use by people aged 75 or over (**Table 1**). The recommendation texts do not take the indication into account, but are based on the properties of the medicinal substance.

The relevant data for each medicinal substance obtained from different sources is collected on an information card for assessment purposes. This card contains information on issues that should be taken into consideration with older people, such as use of the medicine in older people, restrictions on its use, the effects of kidney function on the dose, adverse effects and interactions.

In addition, inclusion of the drug in international criteria or lists of potentially inappropriate medications (PIM) and any comments made by the pharmaceutical authorities concerning use of the medicine are investigated. A literature search is also performed for each medicinal substance in order to obtain the latest research data. Fimea is responsible for the maintenance and timeliness of the information cards.

What data sources, criteria and lists are used and taken into account when compiling the information cards?

As a rule, the data sources include summaries of product characteristics and databases and publications suitable for the purpose, such as those available in the Terveystietä health portal, as well as Micromedex and Lexicomp.

Textbooks and national and international expert publications are used when examining the pharmacological properties of a medicinal substance. Bulletins related to the use and safety of a medicine are obtained from the European Medicines Agency (EMA) website.

Recent scientific evidence is investigated using a literature search in Pubmed, the implementation of which is planned with an information expert. The data content of Meds75+ is never based on a single source, but represents a synthesis of data collected from different sources and the opinion of the expert group.

For information card purposes, the inclusion of the medicinal substance is checked in the following criteria or lists of potentially inappropriate medications: Beers, STOPP/START, EU(7)-PIM, Sweden's indicators on pharmacotherapy for older people, STOPPFall, PRISCUS and NORSEP. The content of Meds75+ is primarily consistent with the recommendations of other criteria.

However, the working group's policy is based on a joint expert consensus, which may for a justified reason deviate from the recommendations of other criteria and sources of information. The references to the criteria or lists used are presented on the Meds75+ website.

Are the information cards used by the working group available?

The information cards were prepared to support the working group's work and they will not be disclosed to third parties. Fimea is responsible for the maintenance and timeliness of the information cards.

How does the working group work?

The working group responsible for updating Meds75+ includes experts in pharmacotherapy for older people, who are located in different parts of Finland and work in healthcare and universities, including the fields of geriatrics, pharmacy and clinical pharmacology. The working group also includes representatives of Fimea.

At this time, the working group has 12 members. The working group may also invite external experts to attend individual meetings and, if necessary, supplement the working group with new members on the basis of their expertise.

The members of the working group familiarise themselves with each medicinal substance discussed at the meeting by means of the updated information cards and by searching for more information on a medicinal substance if necessary. A member of the working group who is familiar with the topic presents information about the medicinal substance. This is discussed during the working group meetings until a consensus is reached on the category and recommendation text for the medicinal substance. If a consensus cannot be reached and further clarification is required, the medicinal substance will be discussed again at the next meeting.

Between meetings, the members of the working group actively follow the latest research information and national and international recommendations on pharmacotherapy. If necessary, the members present issues they have observed to the working group for consideration. The working group meets regularly on a monthly basis, with the exception of a break during the summer.

Where can I find the category and recommendation for a specific medicinal substance?

The Meds75+ database is available for everyone free of charge in Fimea's Medicine Search. Information is available in Finnish, Swedish and English.

Healthcare professionals can access the database, for example, through the Vanhus ja lääke (Older people and medicines) section of the Terveystieto medicine database (Duodecim), the Salko database (Association of Finnish Pharmacies) and the Pharmaca Fennica Premium online service (Pharmaca Health Intelligence Oy). Application developers can also integrate the database into their own information products (such as patient data and decision-making support systems). At this time, the data has been integrated with at least Apotti and Procurow.

How has using Meds75+ been perceived in day-to-day healthcare?

Based on user interviews conducted in autumn 2023, physicians find the information provided by Meds75+ useful. In particular, its concise presentation format was found to be very functional in daily clinical work. The brief recommendation text is easily understood. It highlights the most important issues to be considered when using a medicine and guides healthcare professionals to search for more detailed information in other databases or medical articles if necessary.

Pharmacy professionals report that the recommendation texts are useful in terms of supporting daily medication-related counselling and are a good source of information when assessing pharmacotherapy.

How do I send feedback or suggestions for changes?

Users of the Meds75+ can send feedback on the database content and suggest changes that need to be implemented and the grounds for these changes, which the working group will then discuss. You can use the Fimea contact form to send any feedback or questions.

https://fimea.fi/en/about_us/contact_information/contact

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