Regular medication reviews for children and young people with ADHD

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The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's (2008) guidelines for the diagnosis and management of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) recommend a full clinical and psychological assessment by an appropriately trained clinician; this should include a detailed developmental and psychiatric history. Stimulant medications, which are Schedule II controlled drugs, are the most commonly prescribed medicines in the UK and across the world for the management of ADHD. Children and young people with a diagnosis of ADHD receiving these stimulant medications are required to attend regular review appointments with a consultant child and adolescent psychiatrist or specialist nurse under shared care guidelines with general practices, and it has long been recognized that appropriately educated nurses can assist in the management of ADHD. Owing to the pharmacological action of the stimulant medication on neurotransmission, there is potential for misuse and dependence. A growing body of evidence suggests that adolescents with ADHD can become involved in drug diversion and that the topic should be explored during assessment. The level of misuse of prescribed stimulants is increasing, and adolescents and young people with ADHD may misuse to enhance cognitive function for academic purposes. The following scenario highlights some of the challenges and opportunities for independent nurse prescribers working in child and adolescent mental health services.