Workplace drug screening: an audit of medical review officer decisions
Dr Sam Farmer, 2010

ABSTRACT

Background: Prescribed and non-prescribed medication use is prevalent in the UK. Drug misuse is common. Bupa clients are mainly from the transport industry, where drug screening is a requirement for safety critical workers. Bupa offers a drug screening service to its clients, which includes a medical review officer (MRO) service. UK employers have become increasingly engaged in workplace drug screening. This research project is in the form of an audit of Bupa’s medical review officer process.

Aims: To establish whether Bupa MRO decisions are based on adequate clinical information. To evaluate how satisfactorily Bupa MROs follow the MRO procedure, and to analyse Bupa’s positive drug screen data.

Methods: An audit was carried out of 264 cases reported as drug screen positive by the laboratory during a 12 month period. Information was manually accessed from Bupa’s electronic document storage system. An audit pro-forma was used to collect relevant data. The data was analysed using the SPSS software. Comparisons were made with MRO process in UK, Europe and the United States of America.

Results: Laboratory positive rate similar to known Bupa average per annum. No statistical difference in the laboratory or MRO positivity rate between the genders, or in terms of age or occupation. Highlighted issues regarding the recording of certain information in the clinical records: chain of custody, donor identification, and details of clinical encounters. Most common illicit drugs detected: cannabis and cocaine. Most common positive drug screens related to medication use: codeine and morphine.

Conclusion: MRO decisions in Bupa are based on adequate clinical information. Issues were identified relating to recording of information in the clinical records - easily corrected with a simple checklist and addressing the issue at future training/refresher training events.