

Online doctor app gave drugs without safety checks

Chris Smyth Health Editor

Patients were prescribed high-risk drugs without proper tests by an online doctor app, inspectors have found.

One person was given a potentially addictive narcolepsy medicine to help them work through the night in one of a series of safety failings at Push Doctor, a service that allows people to pay for an instant smartphone consultation with a GP. The Care Quality Commis-

sion has demanded urgent improvements after finding that "red flag" symptoms were not always recorded.

"We found that the service was not providing safe, effective or well-led services but was providing caring and responsive services," Steve Field, chief inspector of general practice, said. His inspection team found that "some care was not being delivered in line with current evidence-based guidance and standards", highlighting the use of

strong painkillers, sedatives and other drugs outside guidelines.

"We saw a 29-year-old patient prescribed modafinil, a drug used for people with narcolepsy, to keep the individual awake to complete an assignment at work," inspectors said. "Modafinil is not licensed for this use and an ECG is required before initiation, which was not done. It is associated with a risk of dependence on the drug.

"GPs also prescribed some high-risk

medicines, for example blood thinners and medicines for mental illness, without checking whether the patient had received the correct tests."

Push Doctor was told to improve risk assessments, prescribing standards and record-keeping. Eren Ozagir, its chief executive, said: "We take the findings very seriously and hold ourselves to the highest standards. In response to one of the issues raised we changed our service line within 24 hours to address it."

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