

## Pharmacy & Medicines Directorate

Westholme  
Woodend Hospital  
Queens Road  
ABERDEEN  
AB15 6LS



To:  
**All General Practitioners,  
Community Pharmacies  
& Drug and Alcohol Teams in  
Grampian**

Date: 26 March, 2020  
Enquiries to: Fiona Raeburn/Lucy Skea  
Extension 57694  
Direct Line 01224 557694  
Email: [lucy.skea@nhs.net](mailto:lucy.skea@nhs.net)  
[fiona.raeburn@nhs.net](mailto:fiona.raeburn@nhs.net)

Dear Colleague,

### Supervised Self-administration of Buprenorphine in Community Pharmacy

**Community Pharmacists:** To limit the risk of contracting or spreading COVID-19 it is in the interest of both patients and pharmacy staff that all patients are encouraged to be in and out the pharmacy as quickly as possible. Supervised sublingual buprenorphine increases time spent in pharmacies. Therefore **for the duration of the COVID-19 outbreak** it is accepted that:

- 1) Supervision can be deemed complete as soon as the patient has been observed placing the product under (all sublingual) or on (Espranor) the tongue. The patient is then free to leave the pharmacy.
- 2) Substance misuse teams are in the process of reviewing all instalment dispensing instructions. The number of people who remain on supervised sublingual buprenorphine tablets after their current prescription ends should be minimal. **Supervision is not a legally enforceable direction** therefore where supervision poses operational issues for the pharmacy in managing spread of COVID-19, the pharmacist can risk assess and dispense as a daily “take home” dose for that day.

Pharmacists should use their professional judgment to ensure that the treatment of, and risk to, the patient is not compromised and that their best interests are met.

**Prescribers:** When next reviewing patients who currently receive supervised sublingual buprenorphine tablets please move to take-home supplies wherever clinically appropriate to do so. Where supervision is deemed essential “Espranor oral lyophilisate” should be the preferred option wherever feasible.

Buprenorphine products vary in the time they take to dissolve. Sublingual preparations like Suboxone, Subutex and generic can take between 3 - 10 minutes or more to fully dissolve. In contrast Espranor a supra-lingual product dissolves on the tongue in as little as 15 seconds.

Grampian guidance for prescribing buprenorphine can be accessed here.  
[https://foi.nhsgrampian.org/globalassets/foidocument/foi-public-documents1---all-documents/Guide\\_Buprenorphine.pdf](https://foi.nhsgrampian.org/globalassets/foidocument/foi-public-documents1---all-documents/Guide_Buprenorphine.pdf)

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Raeburn Lucy Skea', written in a cursive style.

**Fiona Raeburn and Lucy Skea**  
Specialist Pharmacists in Substance misuse  
NHS Grampian Substance Misuse Services

Cc David Pflieger, Director of Pharmacy & Medicines Management and Controlled  
Drugs Accountable Officer, NHS Grampian  
Anne Taylor, Controlled Drug Pharmacist, NHS Grampian