

Date: 16 March, 2020
Your Ref: COVID-19 SMS

Enquiries: Substance Misuse Pharmacists
Email: grampian.smspharmacists@nhs.net

Dear Colleagues,

COVID-19 CONTINGENCY PLANNING – ALCOHOL AND DRUG SERVICES

Alcohol and drug services across Grampian are contingency planning in response to COVID-19. Teams will be undertaking a review of both the frequency of face to face appointments and the feasibility of relaxing dispensing instalment dispensing. This is being undertaken on an individual patient basis. It is designed to reduce workload on both clinical and community pharmacy services. Clinicians may seek input from the pharmacy to help inform this decision.

For those patients who are deemed stable on their current prescriptions prescribers may extend the duration of controlled drug prescriptions longer than the 30 days recommended good practice outlined in Medicines Ethics and Practice (MEP edition 43, page 97):

"The Department of Health and the Scottish Government have issued strong recommendations that the maximum quantity if Schedule 2, 3 or 4 CDs prescribed should not exceed 30 days. This is not a legal restriction but prescribers should be able to justify the quantity requested (on a clinical basis) if more than 30 days' supply is prescribed. There may be genuine circumstances for which medicines need to be prescribed in this way."

This has been discussed and agreed with the Accountable Officer's team for NHS Grampian. Alcohol and drug teams have been advised that prescriptions can be extended for a maximum duration of 12 weeks whilst ensuring that decisions remain clinically appropriate. This advice is specifically for substance misuse prescriptions. GP surgeries are being advised **not** to change the length of their general prescriptions due to potential impacts on the supply chain. These changes will not significantly affect the supply chain as continued instalment dispensing will have minimal impact on the quantity supplied.

If you have any clinical concerns regarding prescriptions received, please get in touch with the nurse or prescriber named on the prescription to discuss.

Self-Isolating Patients and Supervised Administration of Medication

If a substance misuse patient makes contact with the pharmacy to inform them that they cannot attend as they have been advised to self-isolate, the patient should be asked to contact their substance misuse nurse or prescriber to agree a solution. The clinician will risk assess options on a case by case basis and work with the pharmacy to agree a plan.

This may involve collection by a representative or by a staff member. Pharmacies should have a robust process in place to satisfy themselves that they are supplying medication to the correct representative. Where pharmacies cannot make contact with the prescriber, such as out of hours, it may be necessary for the pharmacist to use professional judgement in assessing how best to dispense medication to maintain continuity of supply.

Supervision of administration is a good practice point rather than a legal requirement therefore a new prescription is not automatically required. MEP page 101 contains further guidance.

Appropriate date

“For an NHS prescription, the appropriate date is **the later** of either the date on which the prescription was signed or a date indicated by the appropriate practitioner as the date before which it should not be dispensed.”

This means that a prescription signed on the 1st February but with a start date “From 4th March” is a legal prescription where all other information is also correct and clinically appropriate. Some pharmacy management systems do not recognise this however these are legal prescription and should be dispensed. Where clinicians receive requests for replacement prescription they will direct you back to this letter.

We appreciate that there may be challenging times ahead and ask that pharmacists and pharmacy staff make pragmatic decisions and use their professional judgement wherever possible to avoid any breaks in treatment. Pharmacy staff may also be the first to note that things are not going as well for patients. Please get in touch with services if you have any concerns regarding patient wellbeing.

Contact numbers:

Substance Misuse Pharmacists: 01224 557694

Aberdeen - Fulton Clinic: 01224 557212 or 557410

Aberdeen - Integrated Alcohol Service: 01224 557845

Aberdeen - Timmermarket Clinic 01224 651130

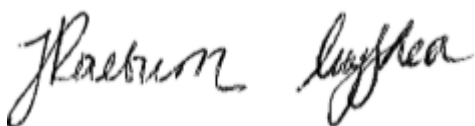
Aberdeenshire Central and South areas (use Kessock if no response): 01467 532833

Aberdeenshire North area - Kessock Clinic: 01346 585160

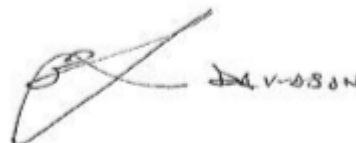
Moray - Moray Integrated Drug and Alcohol Services: 01343 552211

If you have any queries regarding the content of this letter please get in touch with Lucy Skea or Fiona Raeburn, Substance Misuse Pharmacists to discuss.

Yours sincerely



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



Dr Bruce Davidson
Consultant Psychiatrist & Clinical Lead
NHS Grampian Drug and Alcohol Services

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