



File 454 Circular 19/02

PHARMACEUTICAL SERVICE

Prescribing Lidocaine Plasters: Reminder

This is a reminder to colleagues about the prescribing of Lidocaine Plasters on States prescriptions in the Community, as there are concerns that their use may be increasing again.

In Primary and Secondary Care this product may only be prescribed at public expense for its licensed indication i.e. **post-herpetic neuralgia only**. The Pain Clinic may also prescribe it for **peripheral neuropathic pain only**. If/when this product is prescribed to hospital inpatients it should not be put on discharge prescriptions and GPs should not be asked to continue prescribing. **For all other pain indications an alternative must be chosen or the plasters prescribed privately.**

Colleagues will be aware of the very high cost and the limited evidence of benefit of these plasters. The first prescription should be considered a trial and if this is not effective they should be discontinued completely. There are better value and more effective treatments available for people with post-herpetic neuralgia. Older people should be advised to consider a shingles vaccine.

The reduction in the prescribing of these plasters since August 2017 has saved £10,000 month. The total savings, of approximately £170,000, have been retained in the Health Fund and are available for the rapidly-increasing demands for other services.

However I have however concerns expressed recently that prescribing may be increasing again. There is a lag time of three months between dispensing and the receipt of prescribing data. If there is a significant increase audits will be required and the plasters may be withdrawn completely.

Thank you for your co-operation with this matter.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Geraldine O'Riordan".

Geraldine O'Riordan MSc MRPharmS
Prescribing Advisor January 22nd 2019