

Prescribing...

Hot Topics October 2019

- ✚ Prescribing of test strips for blood glucose has fallen in the Bailiwick and the use of preferred strips has increased.
- ✚ Antibiotic guidelines have been updated and are now on the MicroGuide app.
- ✚ Lidocaine plasters may only be prescribed for their licensed indication in primary care or for peripheral neuropathic pain by the Pain Clinic.

This bulletin contains an update on three of the current medicines optimisation projects.

1. Test strips for blood glucose

In 2018 local guidelines were published on the prescribing of test strips for the measurement of blood glucose. The key message from the guideline was that the overwhelming majority of people with Type 2 Diabetes who are only on oral agents do not require self-monitoring. Trials have reported no benefit and that patient anxiety may be raised as a result. These products regularly appear in significant quantities in returns from patients homes. Advice on the best value strips recommended by our Specialists for people with Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes was also included. Since then the prescribing of strips and their cost has fallen, which is great news. The proportion of all strips that the recommended products comprise has increased from 52% to 67%. Monthly "snapshot" figures of dispensed prescriptions are as follows

Month	Prescription Items Dispensed	Ingredient cost
August 2017	578	£18,265
August 2018	540	£16,377
August 2019	468	£14,440

Reference : EPACT2

Prescribers are kindly requested to continue to review the use of blood glucose test strips in all patients to ensure that their use follows the guidelines. Please check that the quantities prescribed are the quantities needed by the patient every month.

2. Antibiotics

Few issues in healthcare are more important than antibiotic resistance. Without access to effective drugs, conditions that are now treatable could become fatal for us, for our colleagues, or for members of our families and friends. Wise prescribing of antibacterials in Primary Care is accepted as the one of the most important ways to reduce the development of super infections. In the Bailiwick the prescribing of antibacterials has fallen considerably. The PSU annual reports state that in 2018 there were nearly 13,000 fewer courses prescribed than in 2012 island-wide: 53,474 vs 66,423, saving £76K in drug cost and fees each year. The EPACT2 system shows that in 2014 there were 54,626 prescriptions issued by the Primary Care Practices in Guernsey and Alderney. This fell

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by 12% to 48,093 in 2018.

Cases of *C diff* infection on the islands in recent years are as follows.

Cases of Community Acquired <i>Clostridium difficile</i> Infection									
2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019 to date
5	7	9	12	12	16	14	16	23	12

Source : Infection Control

Updated local Primary and Secondary Care Antibiotic guidelines are now available and are also now on the MicroGuide app. MicroGuide can be downloaded from Google Play or similar. Anybody can register and this is free. Our guidelines are under "Committee for Health and Social Care". The paediatric guidelines will be added ASAP. Prescribers are earnestly requested to familiarise themselves with the guidelines and to use these drugs as wisely as possible.

3. Lidocaine plasters

Finally, prescribers are reminded that these plasters are only funded for their licensed indication i.e. post-herpetic neuralgia in primary care. But there are better value and more effective alternatives available. Our colleagues in the Pain Clinic may also prescribe them for peripheral neuropathic pain only. The difficulty of managing long term pain in sufferers, many of whom have other health issues and complex needs, is immense and is not underestimated. But it is important that these plasters are used as per the agreement, as the evidence to support their use is poor and they are restricted elsewhere. The annual cost fell from £163k in 2016 to £45K in the first eight months of 2019. Changes in the volume and cost per month of prescribing are as follows

Month	Ingredient Cost of Lidocaine Plasters	Prescription Items
August 2016	£13,754	236
August 2017	£4,927	123
August 2018	£5,615	118
August 2019	£5,977	103

Reference : EPACKT

In summary

- Financial pressures on our healthcare system have never been greater.
- All concerned should be very proud of the above improvements in the quality and cost of prescribing.

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