

To: Community Pharmacies

Gransha Park House  
15 Gransha Park  
Clooney Road  
LONDONDERRY  
BT47 6FN

Tel : 028 9536 3375

Fax : 028 9536 1166

Web Site : [www.hscboard.hscni.net](http://www.hscboard.hscni.net)

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Dear Colleague

## **ARRANGEMENTS FOR MANAGING PRESCRIPTIONS**

As we move into the next phase of the COVID response, I would like to acknowledge the response of community pharmacies in supporting the public, patients and their carers.

The HSCB has been made aware of a small number of GP practices who have changed their arrangements for the management of prescriptions as a result of the current COVID-19 situation. My colleague, Dr O'Brien, Head of GMS, has communicated the following issues and recommendations to GP practices as part of a broader communication. The purpose of this letter is to share with you those issues and her advice.

### **(i) Arrangements for Prescription Ordering**

It has been reported that some patients are experiencing difficulty accessing repeat prescription telephone lines due to other messages on the practice telephone system.

Action: Practices have been asked to ensure that patients can continue to order their prescriptions directly with the practice in the usual manner.

### **(ii) Issuing of prescriptions to Patients**

Prescriptions should continue to be issued to patients in the usual manner and in line with the recent DoH guidance. Arrangements to enable community pharmacists to provide emergency supplies of repeat medicines are in development and we will wish to share in due course. In the meantime, GP practices have been asked not to refer patients to seek an emergency supply of their routine repeat medicines from their community pharmacist.

### **(iii) Prescription collection**

It has been reported that in some practices, patients have been advised that they cannot collect their own prescriptions and instead must have them picked

up by a community pharmacy The prescription collection time for community pharmacies has also been restricted to a very narrow window towards the end of the day.

Although HSCB does not commission a community pharmacy prescription collection service, we are aware that a number of pharmacies provide this service by agreement on an individual patient basis. GP practices have been advised that:

- Any community pharmacy prescription collection service should be arranged on an individual patient basis and not introduced as a general GP surgery policy for all patients at this time. It should only be put in place after discussion and agreement with both the patient and the community pharmacy, and should not be imposed.
- The time slot(s) for community pharmacy prescription collection arrangements should be agreed between the GP practice and the community pharmacy to facilitate workflow for both parties e.g. it should both facilitate the smooth management at receptions, and should allow sufficient time for the community pharmacy to order and receive stocks of medicines, and dispense them safely to patients.

It is vitally important that primary care service is co-ordinated and we appreciate your ongoing collaborative response to this public health emergency. Thank you for your co-operation with this matter.

Yours sincerely,



**Joe Brogan**  
**Assistant Director of Integrated Care**  
**Head of Pharmacy and Medicines Management**