

To:
All GP Practices
All Community Pharmacists
GP Federation Leads
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pharmacists)
ICP leads

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24th November 2020

Dear Colleagues

REMINDER OF GUIDANCE FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF REPEAT PRESCRIPTION REQUESTS

HSCB recently issued Guidance on the Management of [Repeat Prescription Requests](#) which was developed jointly by GPC, CPNI, Federation Pharmacists and HSCB.

Initial feedback indicates that the guidance has been well received and that in the main, arrangements between GPs and Community Pharmacists are working well, despite the extreme pressures that both groups are currently facing. We would like to thank you for your ongoing work in ensuring that patients can continue to receive their prescriptions in a timely way, and in trying to make local arrangements as streamlined as possible. However, we continue to be made aware of a small number of ongoing local issues which are causing difficulties for both staff and patients. Issues of particular concern include:

(i) Patients not ordering their prescriptions in a timely way

It is vital that patients take responsibility for their own medications and prescription ordering arrangements where possible at this busy time. To this end, HSCB has worked with CPNI and GPC to produce a patient information video which is being promoted via social media. The video can be seen at the link <https://vimeo.com/hscboard/480318780>. HSCB will continue to promote similar messages to patients via social media in the run-up to Christmas.

(ii) Prescription Direction

There continue to be reports of GP practices directing prescriptions to community pharmacies which have not been nominated by patients. This is causing additional work for all those involved in the repeat prescription process, as well as distress for patients.

As outlined in the guidance:

- *Practices should only send prescriptions to a community pharmacy when the patient has nominated one; prescriptions should not be sent to any pharmacy other than the one that has been named as there is no patient consent to do so*
- *Practices should ensure prescription collection arrangements are clarified with the patient or their representative at the time of ordering and noted in the patient record.*

(iii) Difficulties with telephone access

Difficulties are still being experienced by a number of community pharmacies across Northern Ireland in getting through to GP practices to resolve clinical queries, causing additional pressures to community pharmacy staff and also stress for patients.

As outlined in the guidance:

Practices should continue to provide a direct or dedicated phone line for community pharmacies and Nursing/Care Homes

Practices should also be aware of the recent HSCB telephony grant that was made available and may be used for this purpose.

Please note that HSCB staff are currently contacting GP surgeries to obtain up-to-date details of the phone numbers that community pharmacies should use in the event of such queries. A list will then be issued to all community pharmacies.

(iv) Access issues for patients and community pharmacies to collect prescriptions

Some patients and community pharmacies are reporting difficulties in gaining access to GP practices to collect prescriptions.

As outlined in the guidance:

- *Practices should ensure there is patient choice and flexibility for collecting prescriptions, and that the option remains for patients to collect a prescription in person by agreement. This information should be made available to patients e.g. via online prescription ordering section of website, pre-recorded messages, posters.*
- *Nursing / Care home staff should be facilitated to collect prescriptions for residents by agreement*
- *Practices should be flexible in agreeing time frames for collection of prescriptions by community pharmacies, good two way communication is essential*

We would again like to thank you for all your support in putting in place new arrangements at such short notice. At this extremely busy and stressful time, it is essential that there are processes in place to facilitate regular communication between GP practices and local Community Pharmacies, and we would encourage you to continue to identify and manage any local issues that arise in a timely way. Please be assured that we will also continue to work to address any ongoing issues

that arise. If you have any queries or would like to discuss this further, please contact your local Pharmacy Adviser.

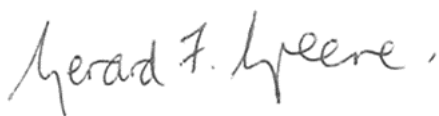
Yours sincerely



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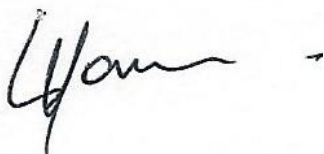
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