Guidance on the prescribing of medication initiated or recommended either after a private episode of care or a referral to a tertiary NHS centre

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<td>GUIDELINE AUTHOR</td>
<td>Ray Lyon, Chief Pharmacist</td>
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Guidance on the prescribing of medication initiated or recommended either after a private episode of care or a referral to a tertiary NHS centre

Background

Trust prescribers are occasionally requested to prescribe on the NHS, medication recommended as part of a private treatment episode or a tertiary NHS referral. If this request is agreed to it may lead to additional costs for the local NHS if the medication is not one usually recommended by the Trust. There may also be occasions when the prescriber feels that due to clinical unfamiliarity they cannot satisfactorily monitor the treatment. Ideally patients should be made aware of the Trust’s position prior to starting a private treatment episode or a tertiary referral.

National Guidance on Private Treatment Episodes

Though not specifically written for mental health services the following national guidance has been used to inform the Trust’s guidance.

With regards to private consultations recommending prescriptions to NHS GPs, the BMA’s Interface between NHS and private treatment (2004) states:

“If the GP considers the medication recommended is clinically necessary, he or she would be required under the NHS terms of service to prescribe that medication within the NHS, even if the assessment from which the need was identified was undertaken in the private sector. The exception to this would be if the medication is specialised in nature and is not something general practitioners would generally prescribe”.

“The obligation to prescribe does not arise if the medication recommended is not clinically necessary or if the medication is generally not provided within the NHS”.

“Where the product is of a very specialist nature, requiring ongoing monitoring, some GPs may feel they have insufficient expertise to accept responsibility for the prescription and so refuse such requests”.

“Other examples concern medications recommended by private consultants that are more expensive, but without good evidence that they are more effective, than those locally prescribed for the same condition within the NHS. In such circumstances, local prescribing advice from the Primary Care Trust may be followed by the NHS GP. This advice should be explained to the patient who will retain the option of purchasing the more expensive drug via the private consultant”.

Guidance

This guidance has been developed in line with the ‘Policy for the interface between private treatment episodes and GP prescribing in the West Sussex Primary Care Trust’, West Sussex PCT, June 2007.

It is acceptable for Trust prescribers to prescribe medication recommended for patients after an assessment done in the private sector or a tertiary NHS unit providing:

- A letter explaining the full rational for the treatment has been provided for the prescriber.
- The medication is licensed and if prescribed ‘off licence’, the use is in line with standard local practice.
- If the medication is unlicensed its use is in line with standard local practice.
- The prescriber feels the medication is clinically necessary.
- The medication is one the prescriber would usually prescribe.
- The prescriber feels they have sufficient expertise to provide any ongoing monitoring.
- The use of the medication does not conflict with NICE guidance or locally agreed protocols.
- That if there is no good evidence that the medication recommended is more effective than those locally prescribed for the same condition than the prescribing advice from the Trust should be followed. This advice should be explained to the patient. For private episodes of care the patient will retain the option of purchasing the medication originally recommended via the private consultant.

Implementation

- Any patient indicating to a prescriber or team that they intend going privately will be given a leaflet explaining the guidance (appendix 1).
- Any patient referred to a tertiary centre will be given a leaflet explaining the guidance (appendix 2).

Reference


Ray Lyon, Chief Pharmacist - Strategy
Version 1 - July 2008          Reviewed January 2011
Appendix 1

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

Prescribing following assessment or treatment in the private healthcare sector

It is the position of the Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust that our prescribers eg. doctors, can provide some medicines on the NHS on advice from a clinician in the private sector.

However, there are a number of circumstances when our prescribers will refuse the request, or offer to prescribe an alternative medicine.

Our prescribers will not prescribe it if it is an unlicensed medicine. He or she may also refuse to prescribe if:

- A letter explaining the full rational for the treatment has not been provided by the consultant in the private sector.
- He or she feels the medicine is not clinically necessary.
- The medication is prescribed outside of its licensed indication.
- The medication is not one he or she would normally prescribe.
- The medication needs special monitoring and he or she feels they do not have the expertise to do this.
- The use of the medication conflicts with NICE guidance or locally agreed protocols.
- An equivalent but equally effective medicine is prescribed locally under prescribing advice from the Sussex Partnership NHS Trust. In this situation you will be offered the equivalent medicine.

In any of these circumstances you will retain the option of purchasing the recommended medicine via a prescription from your consultant in the private sector.

There is also no provision for refunding any money already spent on private treatment, including medicines.

Dr Tim Ojo, Executive Medical Director
January 2011
INAFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

Prescribing following assessment or treatment in a tertiary (specialist) NHS centre

It is the position of the Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust that our prescribers e.g. doctors, can provide most medicines on the NHS on advice from a clinician in a tertiary (specialist) NHS centre.

However, there are a number of circumstances when our prescribers may offer to prescribe an alternative medicine or refuse to prescribe.

Our prescribers will not usually prescribe it if it is an unlicensed medicine. He or she may also refuse to prescribe if:

- A letter explaining the full rational for the treatment has not been provided by the consultant from the tertiary (specialist) NHS unit.
- He or she feels the medicine is not clinically necessary.
- The medication is prescribed outside of its licensed indication.
- The medication is not one he or she would normally prescribe.
- The medication needs special monitoring and he or she feels they do not have the expertise to do this.
- The use of the medication conflicts with NICE guidance or locally agreed protocols.
- An equivalent but equally effective medicine is prescribed locally under prescribing advice from the Sussex Partnership NHS Trust. In this situation you will be offered the equivalent medicine.

When a decision is made to not prescribe or to use an alternative medicine to that initiated or recommended by a consultant from a tertiary (specialist) NHS unit, a full explanation will be given to you and a record of the conversation recorded in your notes.

Dr Tim Ojo, Executive Medical Director
January 2011