Guidance on the prescribing of medication initiated or recommended either after a private episode of care or a referral to a tertiary NHS centre
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 Guidance from the BMA Medical Ethics Department (May 2009) states:

“When patients seek specialist treatment privately, the private consultant may prescribe any necessary medication. Often, however, consultants recommend a particular medication and patients ask their GP to issue a NHS prescription rather than paying for it privately. Even though individuals opt for private treatment or assessment, they are still entitled to NHS services. Where the GP considers that 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; however

• if the medication is specialised in nature and is not something GPs would generally prescribe, it is for the individual GP to decide whether to accept clinical responsibility for the prescribing decision recommended by another doctor.”

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 ideally be given a leaflet explaining the guidance (appendix 1) before being seen or if not, if they have come requesting medication following a private recommendation and the prescriber is unwilling to prescribe.

- Any patient referred to a tertiary centre will be given a leaflet explaining the guidance (appendix 2) before attending the tertiary care or if not, if they have come requesting medication following a visit to a tertiary centre and the prescriber is unwilling to prescribe.

**Reference**

The interface between NHS and private treatment: a practical guide for doctors in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (May 2009)(online)

www.bma.org.uk/search?query=private%20prescribing%20and%20GPs
Appendix 1

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

Prescribing following assessment or treatment in the private healthcare sector

It is the position of the Sussex Partnership Trust that our prescribers e.g. 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

Originally developed 2008
Reviewed unchanged January 2011 and November 2015 Review November 2019

If you require this leaflet in an alternative format, ie easy read, large text, audio, Braille or a community language please contact the Pharmacy Team on 01243 623349 (Text Relay calls welcome)
INFORMATION 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

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