

Prescribing Points



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Oxfordshire

Cinical Commissioning Group

This edition of prescribing points includes links to updated CMPA guidelines, the EMA review of combined hormonal contraceptives, the traffic light status of Bard Catheter Tray, a medicine price increase update, information on the DOH consultation on prescribing restrictions of sildenafil, an update on prescribing generic medicines for epilepsy and an article highlighting the sodium content of dispersible preparations. Please let us know if you are receiving this newsletter and it is no longer relevant to you and also if you know a colleague that might find it useful so that we can keep our circulation list up to date.

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Cow's Milk Protein Allergy(CMPA)

Prescribing spend on milk formulas in Oxfordshire has increased from £40k per quarter in 10/11 to £70k per quarter in 13/14. The increase can partly be explained by the increase in number of babies presenting with CMPA. New [guidelines](#) for diagnosis and management have been developed based on the Milk Allergy in Primary Care (MAP) guidelines.

Key points include:-

- Breast milk remains the ideal choice
- Try exclusion of cows milk from maternal diet
- Do not prescribe Soya milk or Lactose free formulas (can be purchased)
- **Extensively hydrolysed protein formulae (eHF)** as first line formulae
- Reintroduce milk after 6 months or at 1 year using the [Milk Ladder](#)



Combined hormonal contraceptives and venous thromboembolism

The European Medicines Agency (EMA) has completed its review of combined hormonal contraceptives (CHCs) and concluded that their benefits in preventing unwanted pregnancies continues to outweigh the risks, and that the known risk of thromboembolism (blood clots in arteries or veins) is small.

The review findings were finalised when the EMA's Committee for Medicinal Products for Human Use (CHMP) endorsed recommendations made in October by the EMA's Pharmacovigilance Risk Assessment Committee (PRAC).

Dr Sarah Branch, Deputy Director of the MHRA's Vigilance and Risk Management of Medicines Division, said:

"Women should continue to take their contraceptive pill. These are very safe, highly effective medicines for preventing unintended pregnancy and the benefits associated with their use far outweigh the risk of blood clots in veins or arteries. No important new evidence has emerged - this review simply confirms what we already know, that the risk of blood clots with all combined hormonal contraceptives is small.

If women have questions, they should discuss them with their GP or contraceptive provider at their next routine appointment but should keep taking their contraceptive until they have done so." Updated guidance and information that promotes better prescribing and greater awareness about the risk of blood clots and the symptoms will be made available to healthcare professionals and women following the conclusion of the review by the European Medicines Agency.

Bard Catheter Tray

It was agreed at APCO in January 2014 that Bard Comprehensive Catheter Trays are blacklisted i.e. not for prescribing. (Bard Biocath Comprehensive Care Foley Tray; Bard Lubri-Sil Comprehensive Care Foley Tray and Bard Biocath Comprehensive Care Foley Tray). These trays contain a range of products that are required when a catheter is inserted, in addition to the catheter; sterile water and a syringe of lubricating gel. They are, however, significantly more expensive than the cost of a these items alone and the accessories included within this product (gloves, apron, a drape etc.) would not normally be supplied on a FP10.

This information has been added to Scriptswitch

Proposed Changes to NHS Availability of Erectile Dysfunction Treatments

Since the patent expiry of Viagra last year, the availability of generic sildenafil has meant the cost of this drug has reduced considerably. The Department of Health have issued a consultation document proposing a change to the current restrictions on the prescribing of sildenafil in the NHS. This is available [here](#). The Oxfordshire [lavender statement](#) on the treatments for erectile dysfunction will be updated in line with the results of this consultation which will close on 21st March 2014.

Medicine Price Increases - Update

Drug	Price increase	Alternative	Alternative price
Senna 7.5 mg tabs pack of 60	From £1.44 to £10	Bisacodyl 5mg tablets (or consider senna OTC purchase)	£2.47 for pack of 60 bisacodyl
Temazepam 10mg and 20 mg tabs pack of 28	Now £23	Zopiclone tablets 3.75 mg and 7.5 mg	£1.32
Amiloride 5 mg tabs pack of 28	From £1.11 to £20.61	Review where appropriate	n/a
Olanzapine tablets pack of 28 oral lyophilisate sugar/free and orodispersible sugar /free	£87.40 and £15.38 respectively	Standard tabs and non-sugar free orodispersible tabs	£1.59 and £3.43 respectively
Oxybutynin patches or unlicensed specials	Costs vary	Oxybutynin elixir 2.5 mg/5ml	£6.88 for 150 ml

Prescribing of Anti-Epileptic Drugs

Following a review of the available evidence, the UK Commission on Human Medicines (CHM) considered the characteristics of AEDs and advised that they could be classified into three categories, based on therapeutic index (a comparison of the amount of a therapeutic agent that causes the therapeutic effect to the amount that causes or toxicity), solubility and absorption, to help prescribers and patients decide whether it is necessary to keep using a supply of a specific manufacturer's product

Category 1 – Phenytoin, carbamazepine, phenobarbital, primidone

For these drugs, doctors are advised to ensure that their patient is maintained on a specific manufacturer's product.

So what?

Phenytoin Capsules-the generic manufacturer can be specified on some GP systems. Locality Support Pharmacist can provide assistance.

Carbamazepine the cheapest branded product is Tegretol 100mg x 84 £2.07, SR 400mg x56 £10.24

Phenobarbital there is no branded product but use is very low.

Primidone the only branded product is Mysoline 250mg x 100 £12.60

Category 2 – Valproate, lamotrigine, perampanel, retigabine, rufinamide, clobazam, clonazepam, oxcarbazepine, eslicarbazepine, zonisamide, topiramate

For these drugs the need for continued supply of a particular manufacturer's product should be based on clinical judgement and consultation with patient and/or carer taking into account factors such as seizure frequency and treatment history.

So what? Prescribe Topiramate and Lamotrigine generically unless there are concerns.

There is a significant price difference between generic and branded products.

Topiramate generic tablets 100mg x 60 £3.37 (Topamax £56.76) Lamotrigine generic 56 x 100mg £2.66 (Lamictal £57.53)

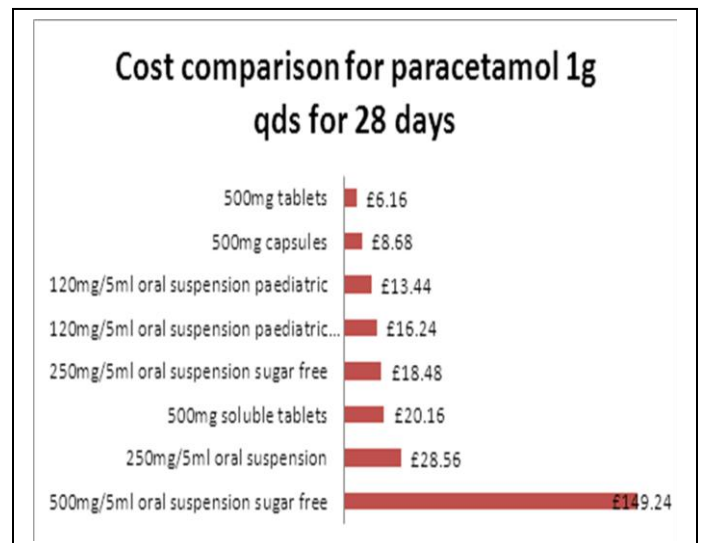
Category 3 - Levetiracetam, lacosamide, tiagabine, gabapentin, pregabalin, ethosuximide, vigabatrin

For these drugs it is usually unnecessary to ensure that patients are maintained on a specific manufacturer's product unless there are specific concerns such as patient anxiety, and risk of confusion or dosing errors.

So what? Levetiracetam switch to generic unless concerns 500mg x 60 £4.17 (Kepra £49.32)

Soluble Paracetamol Sodium Content

The British Medical Journal has published the [results](#) of an observational study that aimed to determine whether patients taking formulations of drugs that contain sodium (soluble, effervescent or dispersible formulations) have a higher incidence of cardiovascular events compared with patients on non-sodium formulations of the same drugs. One of the most regularly prescribed dispersible/effervescent preparations is paracetamol tablets 500mg. The study suggests that dispersible and effervescent formulations of paracetamol 500 mg, can contain upto 18.6 mmol of sodium in each tablet and therefore the maximum daily dose of eight tablets/day would result in the ingestion of 148.8 mmol of sodium. The total recommended sodium intake for an adult in the UK is 2.4 g/day (104 mmol/day).



So what?

Clinicians should be aware of the association between sodium containing drug formulations and increased cardiovascular events. Use of dispersible, effervescent and soluble medicines should be **avoided where this is possible**. The table above illustrates that paracetamol tablets are the most cost effective formulation, but if an alternative is required for patients who have swallowing difficulties the liquid options seem most appropriate. Scriptswitch directs prescribers towards the use of paracetamol 250mg/5ml oral suspension (sugar free).