

Prescribing SSRIs for children and young people

(Written by Dr Zoe Ellison Wright of CAMHS)

A reminder that SSRIs in children and young people under 18 should be initiated by a specialist rather than in primary care. This is because young people should receive talking therapies in combination with antidepressants and the treatment should be supervised by a child and adolescent psychiatrist.

If a GP as an independent practitioner makes a decision to initiate an SSRI to a child or young person in primary care, the monitoring and follow up remain the responsibility of the GP until the patient is taken on by Core CAMHS as per routine assessment and treatment pathways.

A summary of NICE guidance is below:

[NICE guidance for the treatment of depression in children and young people \(NG134\):](#)

Antidepressant medication should not be used for the initial treatment of children and young people with mild depression. If an antidepressant is to be prescribed this should only be following assessment and diagnosis by a child and adolescent psychiatrist. The antidepressant medication should be given in combination with psychological therapy. Fluoxetine is the only antidepressant for which clinical trial evidence shows that the benefits outweigh the risks. Weekly monitoring is advised for the first 4 weeks of treatment.

[NICE guidance for the treatment of Social Anxiety Disorder \(CG159\):](#)

Do not routinely offer medication to children and young people for social anxiety disorder.

[NICE guidance for the treatment of OCD \(CG31\):](#)

An SSRI should only be prescribed to children and young people with OCD following assessment and diagnosis by a child and adolescent psychiatrist who should also be involved in decisions about dose changes and discontinuation. Children and young people with OCD starting treatment with SSRIs should be carefully and frequently monitored and seen on an appropriate and regular basis. Sertraline is licensed for the treatment of children and young people with OCD. Fluoxetine should be used instead in patients with significant comorbid depression.

Assisted medicines pilot

There is currently a pilot underway for patients being discharged from DCH who may need help complying with their prescribed medication. The aim of the pilot is to prevent the use of monitored dosage systems (MDS) where other options are available and prevent readmissions to hospital with problems related to medicines compliance. A range of interventions may be offered as part of the pilot, as follows:

- 'Pill popper' devices.
- '[Medisafe](#)' mobile phone app.
- [Cadex](#)® medication reminder devices (worn as a watch or pendant).
- [Memrabel](#)® clock devices for patients with memory loss

Certain groups of patients are excluded from the pilot – such as those without mental capacity, those without a friend or family member to support use of the device/intervention provided, patients already using another device or intervention (including MDS/Dossett boxes).

If a patient has been assessed as part of the pilot (whether an intervention is supplied or not), this will be documented in the patient's medical record. If an intervention is recommended, the patient's GP will be notified via discharge summary. If the patient provides consent, then their nominated community pharmacy will also be notified by way of a referral for the Discharge Medicines Service.

Sterile dressing packs

A quick reminder of the current position around prescribing of sterile dressing packs:

- Generally, sterile dressing packs should not be prescribed on FP10 prescription.
- District nurses and health visitors should use Softdrape® sterile dressing packs, and procure them through the NHS supply chain (not prescribable).
- Care homes should not request sterile dressing packs on FP10. Nursing homes are expected to provide any equipment that is necessary for the care of their general client population. A nursing home would be required to have a stock of basic wound care packs to carry out tissue viability interventions and wound management, when required.
- When it has been determined that a sterile environment is needed for a procedure in a GP practice then one should be used from practice stock.

The **full position statement** around prescribing of sterile dressing packs in primary care can be found on the [Dorset Formulary](#).

CPD / learning resources

- [Developing medication safety across the system \(MSATS\)](#): the MSATS series of interactive webinars are aimed at healthcare professionals with a role within or passion for medication safety. Each webinar tackles a different system-wide medication safety issue and shares related innovative practices.
- To help support PCNs a new [training and resources page](#) has been launched on the NHS Dorset Medicines Optimisation website. We will continue to update this page when events/information become available.

Quick bites

- The Dorset Formulary is available at: www.dorsetformulary.nhs.uk.
- SPS guidance – [Considerations when switching between solid doses and liquids](#) – covering considerations needed when changing between solid dose and liquid formulations, for example potential differences in bioavailability, release profile variations, excipient differences, site of action, and licensed uses.
- [UKHSA Vaccine update: issue 341, August 2023](#) – includes new and updated measles resources, materials for urgent measles testing, and information about routine and non-routine vaccine supply.
- [Resources to support patients having a Structured Medication Review - The AHSN Network](#)
- [Penicillin allergy checklist](#): the Royal Pharmaceutical Society working with its Antimicrobial Expert Advisory Group have produced a checklist for pharmacists to inform conversations with patients, who are also being asked to check their medical records to ensure not incorrectly labelled with penicillin allergy.
- All valproate containing products (including sodium valproate, semisodium valproate, and valproic acid) will be [reclassified as special containers](#) from 11 October 2023. Changes to Human Medicines Regulations mandate full pack dispensing of all licensed medicines containing valproate. Where the quantity on a prescription is not for a quantity in an original pack size or multiple of pack sizes, the nearest number of full packs will be reimbursed (either rounded up or down; rounded down when the quantity prescribed is exactly half way between rounding up or down).
- [Waste management company launches nationwide inhaler recycling service](#). The “first UK-wide” inhaler recycling service has been launched after a successful trial. Community pharmacies that want to participate in Grundon’s recycling service can purchase containers to securely store the inhalers.
- [SPS Medication Safety Update](#) - latest observatory of recent safe medication practice research, reports, and publications, including regulator and statutory body activity, SPC changes or manufacturer risk minimisation materials, drug shortages and discontinuations, national guidance, and SPS output.

This newsletter is for healthcare professionals. It represents what is known at the time of writing so information may be subsequently superseded.