

Drug shortages / supply issues

- On 6th June 2024, the Department of Health and Social Care issued a medicine supply notification to advise that there are limited supplies of quetiapine immediate release tablets until late August 2024. Please refer to the [local guidance](#) for managing this shortage.
- Disopyramide (Rythmodan®) 100mg capsules will be out of stock from mid-July 2024 until mid-January 2025. Refer to the [SPS drug supply tool](#) for suggested alternatives (free login needed).

#HelpYourNHS

A multimedia campaign was launched on 8 July to support prescribers in helping people understand the approach adopted by NHS Dorset to prescribing over the counter medicines. Practices are systematically reducing the amount of the medicines prescribed. Hospitals have been asked to cease asking practices to continue over the counter medicines on discharge. For more information, including downloadable resources to support the campaign, please visit the [#HelpYourNHS](#) page on the NHS Dorset Website.

Topiramate (Topamax): introduction of [new safety measures, including a PPP](#)

Topiramate is now contraindicated in pregnancy and in women of childbearing potential unless the conditions of a Pregnancy Prevention Programme (PPP) are fulfilled. This follows a review by the MHRA which concluded that the use of topiramate during pregnancy is associated with significant harm to the unborn child.

Documentation to support prescribers are arriving presently to support documenting PPP discussions. Searches are available in Dorset SystmOneGPs > Medicines Optimisation > Womens Health. Changes to Ardens Topiramate templates are presently still outstanding but expected later this month with PPP coding.

Harms included a higher risk of congenital malformation, low birth weight and a potential increased risk of intellectual disability, autistic spectrum disorder and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder in children of mothers taking topiramate during pregnancy. Please see [advice for prescribers](#) and [advice for dispensers](#).

New restrictions on puberty blockers

On 29th May 2024, the government introduced regulations to restrict the prescribing and supply of puberty-suppressing hormones, to children and young people under 18 in England, Wales and Scotland. The new arrangements apply to gonadotropin-releasing hormone analogues - medicines that consist of, or contain, buserelin, gonadorelin, goserelin, leuprorelin acetate, nafarelin or triptorelin. The restrictions will last from 3 June to 3 September 2024, and will apply to prescriptions written by UK private prescribers and prescribers registered in the EEA or Switzerland.

In addition, the government has also introduced indefinite restrictions to the prescribing of these medicines within NHS primary care in England, starting on 26th June 2024. For information about the restrictions in full, please refer to the guidance published by [NHS England](#).

Warfarin and tramadol interaction

In December 2023, a UK coroner issued a [prevention of future deaths report](#) after a patient was co-prescribed warfarin and tramadol and sadly died as a result of a bleed in the brain. The patient had an INR almost 12 times the normal level when she was admitted to hospital. The MHRA has now highlighted the interaction between warfarin and tramadol in their [Drug Safety Update](#), which contains full details of the interaction and advice for prescribers. Warfarin has been added to the BNF as an interacting drug with tramadol (and vice versa), with an interaction marked 'severe'. A search is available in SystmOne Dorset SystmOne GPs > Medicines Optimisation > Alerts.

Discharge medicines audit

Colleagues from across Dorset have come together to work on a quality improvement (QI) project looking at issues relating to transfer of care. As part of this project, the group are looking at ways to improve the standard of discharge summaries when patients are discharged from acute trusts. PCNs across the system have recently participated in an audit of discharges received in primary care for a period of one week.

The data collated as part of this audit will form baseline data ahead of the minimum discharge standards being published and monitor improvements over the course of the QI transfer of care project.

Lateral Flow Device Tests Supply Advanced Service

In May an [NHS service finder](#) for pharmacies offering free COVID-19 rapid lateral flow tests was launched to enable patients to locate a pharmacy providing free COVID-19 NHS lateral flow device (LFD) tests.

The [revised service specification](#) for the community pharmacy Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests advanced service has been updated to make the eligibility clearer as set out in NICE guidance and to emphasize that eligible patients do not need to be symptomatic of COVID-19 to obtain a free box of tests.

Quick bites

- The Dorset Formulary is available at: www.dorsetformulary.nhs.uk.
- SPS have developed some guidance on suitable options for patients with swallowing difficulties in different drug groups – [ACEI](#), [ARB](#), [SSRIs](#), [PPIs](#), [anticoagulants](#), [antiplatelets](#).
- An updated copy of the patient [leaflet explaining 28 day prescribing](#) has now been made available on the medicines optimisation portal of the NHS Dorset website.

Learning

- Watch the recording of the [Polypharmacy Lunchtime Masterclass on Stopping Antidepressants Safely](#). It covered withdrawal syndromes, the process of tapering slowly, and even slower reductions as the total dose decreases.
- The SPS website has a section on '[training and development](#)' covering a wide range of topics relevant to primary care – including but not limited to complex medication regimes: supporting adherence; managing medications in renal impairment; drug interactions; adverse drug reactions; manual dexterity and swallowing difficulties.

REGIONAL MEDICINES INFORMATION SERVICE

If you work in primary care (including community pharmacy), specialist medicines advice can be obtained from SPS via **0300 7708564** or email asksps.nhs@sps.direct. (Staff in Dorset NHS Trusts should seek advice from their pharmacy teams).

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