



COVID-19 virus and medicines

This month's Tablet Press has been devoted to prescribing issues and support around Covid-19.

- **Prescription duration and quantity**

National advice is that all prescriptions should remain within normal supply durations i.e. 28 days in the vast majority of cases, to avoid drug shortages. If patients panic order and stockpile then it will cause problems in supply. Even patients who are "shielding" or self-isolating and not able to get out and collect medicines should not be stockpiling medicines. Stockpiling will exacerbate pressures on prescribed medicine stocks and may create shortages.

- **Community pharmacy**

Over the past couple of weeks, Community Pharmacies have dispensed three times the usual number of prescription items. When this is linked to staff being off work due to the Covid-19, items not being in stock due to the demand e.g. inhalers, and social distancing, then it is not surprising that there have been large queues outside pharmacies both nationally and locally.

- Pharmacy opening –. In order to catch up with the dispensing of prescriptions, pharmacies are currently allowed to close for certain hours every day, but are expected to be open to the public between 10am-12 noon and 2pm-4pm; 100 hours pharmacies should be open from 10am-12pm and 2pm-6pm. If they need to further reduce their core hours unexpectedly they need to let Area Team and DOS know.
- Deliveries to patients - Deliveries from pharmacies are not a commissioned (funded) service. Many pharmacies do not have capacity to cope with the current unprecedented demand. The government is planning to support the delivery of medicines to "shielded" patients, but the details have not yet been clarified. Community volunteer groups are being set up across Northamptonshire and work is being undertaken to see if they could help with the delivery of medicines.

- **Drug /condition specific national / local advice;**

A large number of resources have been published nationally to support and advise on issues around prescribing. These have been collated on to the **prescribing** part of the **Covid-19 section** of the **Primary Care Portal**. This includes:

- National guidance
- Useful Information sources
- Advice on clinical conditions from advisory bodies e.g. BTS as well as local guidance
 - Acute Kidney Injury (AKI)
 - Palliative Care
 - Cardiovascular
 - Respiratory
 - Central Nervous System
 - Substance misuse
 - Diabetes
 - Sexual Health Musculoskeletal & Joint Diseases
 - MSK, Dermatology and Gastroenterology DMARD prescribing
 - Nutrition

If you are a Health Care Professional and do not have access to the Primary Care Portal please contact Sue Barron susan.barron@nhs.net

This edition is also available on GP Portal

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