

**August 2011**

**To: Sheffield GPs & Community Pharmacists**

**Dear Colleague**

**7/28 Day Prescribing**

Sheffield prescribers are increasingly being asked to write 7-day prescriptions for patients whose medicines are dispensed into monitored dosage systems (MDS). Some of these patients meet the criteria of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) and dispensing contractors have a duty to take necessary and reasonable steps to assist qualifying patients to comply with taking their medicines.

There is some funding provision in place in recognition of the additional expense of complying with the DDA. However, since many of the items dispensed are for patients that do not meet DDA criteria the use of weekly prescriptions to supplement the cost of preparing MDS is an inappropriate use of limited NHS resources.

To help contractors identify whether a patient qualifies under DDA, NHS Sheffield has developed an assessment tool which is being made available. An alternative tool is also available from Primary Care Contracting. However, these tools do not always provide definitive answers and additional subjective professional interpretation is required.

Many intervention options exist that may assist qualifying patients and each case should be considered independently, e.g. MAR charts, reminder charts, non-child lock containers, large print labels and dispensing into MDS.

If an MDS is the appropriate adjustment then prescriptions **should not normally** be for 7 days supply. The PCT is advising GP practices that requests in respect of **new** patients for 7 days prescriptions should not be routinely accepted and there must be a substantive clinical reason to justify such prescribing e.g. patients known to have unstable medicine regimes, where changes are common and frequent, patients with limited cognitive ability and those known to be at risk of self harm.

Contractors should not be pressured into providing MDS by carers for their benefit, rather than for the patient's benefit. The Sheffield Medication Policy for Home Support identifies bottle and boxes as the primary packaging for medication, MDS only being considered as a last resort.

Finally, any decision to provide MDS should not be taken lightly; safety in dispensing constitutes an over-riding factor. The inappropriate and unnecessary use of compliance aids can also make matters worse. For example, MDS can reduce a patient's knowledge and familiarity with their medicine regime and require users to have appropriate manual dexterity and competency to select the correct compartment. It is also important to remember that not all medicines are suitable for dispensing into MDS, e.g. hygroscopic items or those sealed under inert gas (to protect from deterioration) and liquids.

**Yours faithfully**



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