

Management of repeat medication

Position

Community pharmacy teams play a key role in medicines optimisation, ensuring patient safety is at the core of service delivery. An important aspect of this is the provision of regular medicines to patients to support the ongoing management of their long-term conditions and improve health outcomes.

Pharmacy Voice fully supports the NHS Repeat Dispensing Service, an Essential Service within the NHS Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework, as the most appropriate and preferred mechanism to facilitate the supply of regular medicines to patients with long term conditions who are stabilised on their medicines regime. This service not only reduces administrative burdens placed on general practitioners, but enables community pharmacy teams to efficiently support the patients in accessing regular medicines without compromising patient care.

The provision of the NHS Repeat Dispensing Service relies on the general practitioner issuing a repeatable prescription. Where general practitioners are not engaging in this practice and community pharmacies are therefore unable to adopt the preferred NHS Repeat Dispensing Service model, Pharmacy Voice supports the provision of non-NHS repeat medication services by community pharmacies to facilitate the ordering of prescriptions and dispensing of regular medicines for their patients.

The vast majority of these non-NHS repeat medication services are delivered to a high standard, are underpinned by robust governance systems and implemented using Standard Operating Procedures. These services, often initiated at the request of the patient, overwhelmingly supports patient adherence to regular medicines prescribed and greatly increases convenience in accessing these medicines, which ensures patient safety is maintained and medicines wastage is minimised.

In recent months, Pharmacy Voice has been made aware of some isolated concerns regarding the mismanagement of non-NHS repeat medication services (e.g. managed repeat services). Where these concerns are supported by robust, unbiased evidence of mismanagement rather than anecdotal or unsubstantiated views, we fully support these pharmacies being held to account. Disproportionate and reactionary responses that limit the availability non-NHS repeat medication services, such as a broad-sweeping ban on all community pharmacy teams ordering prescriptions from general practices on their patient's behalf, can put patients' health outcomes in jeopardy by increasing the risk of non-adherence.

Pharmacy Voice urges general practitioners and local clinical commissioning groups to work closely with community pharmacy teams in the best interest of their patients, to take full advantage of the preferred NHS Repeat Dispensing service (sometimes referred to as batch prescribing) available within the existing NHS Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework.

Background

NHS Repeat Dispensing, an Essential Service within the NHS Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework, enables a community pharmacy to dispense a repeatable prescription issued by the prescriber (usually the general practitioner) at regular intervals for up to 12 months without needing to contact the prescriber for purely administrative purposes. As a result, the prescription collection process is simplified without compromising patient care and the burden of repeat prescribing on general practitioners reduced. The benefits of NHS Repeat Dispensing is further enhanced when issued via Release 2 of the Electronic Prescription Service (EPS).

Since the introduction of the NHS Repeat Dispensing service in 2005, and despite the efforts of community pharmacies to promote the service to patients and encourage adoption by general practices, uptake has remained very low. Consequently, community pharmacies have adopted a variety of non-NHS repeat medication services to facilitate the provision of regular medication to patients. Examples of non-NHS repeat medication services include:

- *Repeat collection services* - where the patient orders a prescription directly from their general practitioner, which is collected from the surgery by the community pharmacy for dispensing
- *Repeat ordering services* - where the patient calls their community pharmacy when they need their medicines and the pharmacy orders the prescription from the surgery and then collects the prescription on behalf of the patient
- *Pharmacy-prompted repeats* – where the patient is contacted by their community pharmacy to check what medication they require around an expected 'due date'. The items are then ordered by the pharmacy and either collected by or delivered to the patient.
- *Managed repeat services* - where the patient requests the medication they would like for their next month when they collect the current month's supply and pharmacists requests prescriptions on behalf of the patient

In accordance with the General Pharmaceutical Council's Governance and Risk Management principles, all services that support the provision of regular medicines to patients must be underpinned by robust systems and implemented using Standard Operating Procedures.

References and further information

Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee, *Repeat Dispensing*, <http://psnc.org.uk/services-commissioning/essential-services/repeat-dispensing/>, accessed 14th October 2015.

NHS England, *Electronic Repeat Dispensing Guidance*, May 2015.

Pharmacy Voice, *Repeat medication ordering and interventions: Practice-based Audit 2013/14*, July 2014.

General Pharmaceutical Council, *Principle 1 – Governance and risk management arrangements*, <https://www.pharmacyregulation.org/pharmacystandardsguide/principle-1-governance-and-risk-management-arrangements-0>, accessed 15th October 2015.

NHS Employers, Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee, General Practitioners Committee, *December 2013: Guidance for the implementation of repeat dispensing*, NHS Employers, 2013.

Community pharmacy teams can access further information and guidance on the provision of repeat management services from:

- The Local Pharmaceutical Committee in their area and/or the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee;
- Standard Operating Procedures available from their company head office or the National Pharmacy Association (NPA) for NPA members;
- The General Pharmaceutical Council; and
- The Royal Pharmaceutical Society.