



integrated working



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Date: 17 April 2020

To: All care home managers in West Suffolk  
Cc: All community pharmacies in West Suffolk

Dear Care Home Manager

### **COVID-19: Over the Counter (OTC) Sales of Paracetamol to Care Home Staff**

Current guidance recommends paracetamol as the first line antipyretic treatment for fever in people possibly infected with COVID-19. Under Care Quality Commission (CQC) Guidance, care home staff should aim to provide an effective, caring and responsive service for their residents. This includes enabling residents to 'access care, support and treatment in a timely way.' During the COVID-19 pandemic, and provided it is clinically appropriate, we are therefore recommending that care home providers try to ensure access to paracetamol for their residents, in anticipation of need, whenever possible. Treatment is likely to be required at short notice and in greater quantities than in a standard household environment. Many care home residents are prescribed paracetamol by their GP. For those who aren't, we recommend that care home providers consider purchasing paracetamol tablets and/or liquid OTC for stock as a homely remedy.

**We understand that care home staff frequently experience difficulty in purchasing sufficient numbers of paracetamol tablets to meet the needs of all their residents.**

We have written to all community pharmacies in West Suffolk, asking them to support care homes by permitting the purchase of up to 96 paracetamol 500mg tablets in one transaction. A copy of this letter is enclosed. In larger care homes, it may be appropriate for staff to request up to 192 tablets, purchased as two separate transactions of 96 tablets. Whilst pharmacists are empowered to refuse to sell or supply ANY medicines, if the sale or supply is contrary to the pharmacist's clinical judgement,<sup>1</sup> supplies of this nature are in the best interest of the patient and we are strongly encouraging pharmacists to use their professional discretion in authorising these sales. However, we ask care home staff to respect the pharmacist's decision if requests to purchase more than 96 tablets in one visit are refused. There are no legal limits on the quantity of OTC paracetamol liquid that can be sold to a person at any one time. Liquid paracetamol may be an appropriate choice for any resident experiencing new or ongoing swallowing difficulties, for example a sore throat.

When a member of staff needs to purchase paracetamol for the residents in your care home, in tablet and/or liquid form, please ask them to print off and complete the enclosed template entitled 'COVID-19 Pandemic: Purchase of Paracetamol Over the Counter (OTC) for the Treatment of Care Home Residents.' The form may be taken to any community pharmacy, where the pharmacist may wish to retain the form as a record of the sale.

For care homes without a current Homely Remedies policy, we have produced a COVID-19 policy that you may wish to use in your home. This policy relates purely to the use of paracetamol for the treatment of symptoms during the current COVID-19 pandemic and a copy of the policy is enclosed.

Yours sincerely

Linda Lord, Chief Pharmacist

<sup>1</sup> RPS Medicines, Ethics and Practice Edition 43