

CARE WHEN YOU NEED IT MOST

Good and convenient access to the medicines that you need

Community pharmacies offer easy access to palliative care medicines for patients.

Palliative care is aimed at offering the highest possible level of comfort to the patient during the last phase of their life. Complex and excessively prolonged treatment has to be avoided as much as possible, allowing the patients to lead as normal a life as possible.

Most of the patients in need of palliative care already have a long lasting relationship, based on trust, with their regular pharmacist. In the difficult circumstances of palliative care, this relationship becomes even stronger.

The pharmacist has the full history of the medicines, previously used by the patient, on record. The name of the pharmacist should therefore also be recorded in the file of the patient, along with that of their doctor, ensuring any additional drug used will be systematically recorded and checked for interactions.

Patients often move between care settings, for example, hospital, hospice and their own home and it is vital that accurate records of the patient's medication are transferred between these settings.

The trusting relationship with the pharmacist offers a strong basis for the psychological and social support needed by the patient and their family. During the last phase of life, the patient and their family are confronted with previously unknown and sometimes bewildering situations. Accepting palliative care as the last option for treatment can be difficult. The family of the patient often decides to hospitalize the patient when it is not really necessary. The main reason is they are not used to the specific- but very normal - evolutions in the palliative phase of life. On the contrary, home treatment is often possible, and should be preferred, as it is more comfortable for the patient.

For humanitarian reasons, patients wishing to stay with their families for as long as possible should be encouraged to do so, and the pharmacists, along with all other health professional, can support the patients, and family members, in making the situation more acceptable, and in taking the right decisions.

Speak to a friendly face at your local community pharmacy

Specialist Support

Pain and symptom control is the most important item in palliative care. One could hardly start with the psychological and comfort aspects of palliative care, if the patient has tremendous pain or other symptoms.

The pharmacological approach in palliative care is specific and special attention should be paid to the right choice of drug, its dosage, the detection of side effects, interactions, over- or under utilization, (certainly in case of polypharmacy, as is often the case in palliative care) are important points where communication between the doctor and the pharmacist can be of high importance. Community pharmacists are ideally placed to offer appropriate advice to patients and their families with regard to controlling pain at difficult times

Core Drug Stockist Scheme (2011)

Cyclizine Injection 50mg/1ml
Dexamethasone Injection 4mg/1ml
Dexamethasone Tablets 2mg
Diamorphine Injection 5mg
Diamorphine Injection 10mg
Diamorphine Injection 30mg
Domperidone Suppositories 30mg
Haloperidol Injection 5mg/1ml
Hyoscine Butylbromide Injection 20mg/1ml
Hyoscine Hydrobromide Injection 400 mcg/1ml
Hyoscine Patches 1mg
Levomopromazine Tablets 25mg
Levopromazine Injection 25mg/1ml
Metoclopramide Injection 10mg/2ml
Midazolam Injection 10mg/2ml
Morphine Injection 10mg
Morphine Injection 30mg
Water for Injection 10ml

- The use of Diamorphine as first line is gradually being replaced with Morphine, both are available on the scheme until the transition is complete.

Barnsley Specialist Drug Stockist Scheme

The condition of those reaching the end of life can change rapidly, thereby requiring an urgent response. The Department of Health End of Life Care Strategy (2008) found that one of the major challenges in relation to the delivery of high quality end of life care in the community includes difficulty in accessing palliative care drugs. Certain drugs used in palliative medicine are not routinely kept by community pharmacies.

However, when prescribed, they need to be obtained quickly and so to prevent time being wasted in trying to obtain drugs, the Barnsley Specialist Drug Stockist Scheme was developed.

The specialist drug stockist scheme created a network of community pharmacies that stock a locally agreed range of specialist drugs, the demand for which may be urgent and/or unpredictable, for example palliative care drugs. The aim of the service is to ensure that patients have prompt access to these specialist drugs when they are required. The service can be provided by any pharmacy, though due to the nature of the service community pharmacies were invited to provide the service based upon their opening hours and location to ensure these specialist drugs can be easily accessed when needed.

The list of drugs in the scheme was developed as part of a collaborative process involving Hospital and Community pharmacists, MacMillan and District Nursing, GP's and consultants from the Hospice.

The main priority is to achieve the best possible quality of life for patients with a life limiting illness, whilst supporting their families, during the period of illness and bereavement.

Extra Benefits

Having a network already established meant that when the Flu Pandemic occurred in 2009/2010 there were already pharmacies in place able to stock and distribute antiviral drugs without a complicated re-commissioning process. In Doncaster a similar scheme has been extended to include antibiotics for Cellulitis. Rotherham CCG have decided to open up their version of the scheme to all pharmacies allowing patients to continue to access their regular Community Pharmacy.

We wish to work with local stakeholders to find ways to better use the skills of Community Pharmacy teams.

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