

12 April 2017

Dear Colleagues

### **NHS England proposals to issue new guidance on certain prescriptions**

Colleagues will be aware, following recommendations from NHS Clinical Commissioners, that NHS England will be announcing a review of a number of products that are considered of limited clinical benefit, or which should be considered as a low priority for NHS funding. These products are believed to include both individual medications, such as omega 3 and fish oils, liothyronine and doxazosin, for example, as well as some gluten free foods and travel vaccines.

In addition, and "in light of the financial challenges faced by the NHS", NHS England may also review other medicines which are readily available 'over the counter', and often at far lower cost, such as treatments for coughs and colds, anti-histamines, indigestion and heartburn medication and sun cream. (NHS England News 28<sup>th</sup> March 2017).

The LMC is aware that certain CCGs have already sought to limit prescribing by local General Practitioners across a number of these areas and this can cause difficulties in the context of current GMS/PMS regulations, particularly the definition of Essential Services, which include a requirement to make available "such treatment or further investigation as is necessary and appropriate" for patients who are either ill but with an expected recovery, terminally ill, or who are suffering from a chronic disease. The LMC recognises the need to use what are limited NHS resources appropriately but any precipitate attempts to introduce local CCG restrictions on prescribing by General Practitioners can cause significant difficulties in the relationship between GPs and their patients and may in fact breach their regulations. Given that as NHS England review is imminent, and one purpose of this is stated to be the provision of guidance to support CCGs in making decisions locally, the LMC has written to all CCGs to ask that any local initiatives that may be currently in progress or planned should now be deferred in anticipation of NHS England's review. If local CCG guidance is introduced subsequently, then it is likely that, if in accordance with NHS England guidance, there will have been considerable publicity and awareness by the public of expected changes in the prescribing by GPs of certain products. This should place GPs patient discussions in a more appropriate context, reduce misunderstanding and avoid a postcode lottery.

If your CCG suggests such prescribing changes outside the context of NHS England's review, the LMC suggests local GPs may find it helpful to support the LMCs approach, refer CCGs to the LMC's advice, and not participate further.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely



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