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To: All GPs and Community Pharmacists for onward cascade to relevant staff

Dear Colleague

Responsibility for Prescribing and Dispensing Specialist Medicines

The Board has been made aware of a number of occasions where Red Listed medicines have been inadvertently prescribed and dispensed in primary care.

As you will be aware, a Red/Amber 'traffic light' system was developed by the Regional Group on Specialist Medicines to provide guidance on where responsibility for the prescribing and supply of Specialist Medicines lies. The aim of this system is to enhance patient care and promote safety in the prescribing, supply and administration of specialist medicines. Full details of this system can be found on the Interface Pharmacist Network for Specialist Medicines website at www.ipnsm.hscni.net

Red List Medicines: Prescribing responsibility remains with the hospital consultant or specialist clinician, and the supply is organised via the hospital pharmacy e.g. linezolid (Zyvox®▼), clozapine. GPs should not normally initiate or prescribe Red Listed medicines. In exceptional cases the decision to prescribe may depend on individual clinical and/or personal circumstances which should be agreed between the GP and the specialist.

Amber List Medicines: Prescribing responsibility is appropriate for primary care with the agreement of the GP. This arrangement may be subject to a formal shared care guideline which details the respective clinical responsibilities of both secondary and primary care.

Recommended action by GP practices:

1. Ensure all staff involved in prescribing are familiar with the Specialist Medicines system (including the website www.ipnsm.hscni.net).
2. Save the link to the Specialist Medicines website as a 'favourite' or as a short-cut on desktops to allow ease of access to this site.
3. It is recommended that Red List medicines are not prescribed in primary care. Refer to the practice's COMPASS report as a guide to determine whether Red List medicines are being prescribed; further details of Red List medicines prescribed can be obtained from your Medicines Management Adviser.
4. Where prescribing of a Red List medicine has been inadvertently transferred into primary care, the medicine can be transferred back into secondary care by completing the 'Notification of Red List Medicine' proforma (see 'Document library' on IPNSM website). It may be necessary to continue to prescribe the medicine for a limited time until prescribing and supply can be arranged from secondary care.

5. When asked to prescribe unfamiliar medicines, the Red Amber List should be checked; where Red List medicines are identified, action should be taken as in point 4.
6. Record all specialist medicines prescribed and supplied by secondary care on the repeat prescribing screen on the GP clinical system; **indicate clearly on the record that these should not be prescribed or dispensed.** This will ensure:
 - GPs/other healthcare professionals in the practice have access to a complete medication list for each patient
 - Interactions are flagged up between specialist medicines and any medicines prescribed in primary care
 - Specialist medicines will be included on medication histories requested and forwarded to secondary care.

Practice staff should take care to ensure prescriptions for specialist medicines prescribed and supplied by secondary care are not issued.

Recommended action by Community Pharmacies

1. Ensure all staff involved in dispensing are familiar with the Specialist Medicines system (including the website www.ipnsm.hscni.net).
2. Save the link to the Specialist Medicines website as a 'favourite' or as a short-cut on desktops to allow ease of access to this site.
3. It is recommended that Red List medicines are not prescribed or dispensed in primary care. Where Red List medicines are prescribed, the GP should be informed so that, where necessary, arrangements can be made for the transfer of responsibility for prescribing and supply to secondary care. It may be necessary to continue to dispense the medicine for a limited time until prescribing and supply can be arranged from secondary care.
4. When prescriptions for unfamiliar medicines are received, the Red Amber List should be checked; where Red List medicines are identified, the GP should be consulted so that appropriate action can be taken as in point 3.
5. Take care to ensure that prescriptions for specialist medicines not supplied are not inadvertently coded and claimed for.

If you have any queries in relation to this alert please do not hesitate to contact your Medicines Management Adviser.

Yours Sincerely



J Brogan

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