

Kent and Medway Medicines Optimisation Team**Prescribing and Medicines Management – COVID-19 Newsletter****Issue (3) 3rd of April 2020**

Please send all medicines queries relating to COVID-19 to wkccg.gpscovid19@nhs.net

Beclomethasone Inhalers

There is an ongoing supply issue with Clenil 100mcg inhalers. The other strengths of Clenil inhalers (50mcg and 200mcg) are available; which may be used if clinically appropriate as an alternative to the 100mcg strength. The 200mcg strength is not licensed for use in children. Please consult the Summary of Product Characteristics and the British National Formulary for licensed indications and dosage requirements for the various strengths of Clenil prior to prescribing.

Supplies of other brands of beclomethasone inhalers are also running out. Although manufacturers are increasing distribution, in many cases this is being dispensed as soon as it hits pharmacy shelves. This is likely to affect the supply of other inhaled products as this crisis continues. **Where required please ensure that patients are prescribed ONE inhaler of each type (where this is sufficient to provide 28 day treatment).**

We will continue to provide you with updates around stock issues.

NHS Volunteer Responders

[NHS Volunteer Responders](#) have been mobilised to help support vulnerable individuals who are self-isolating. Referrals for volunteer support can be made by GPs, social prescribing link workers, practice nurses, community pharmacists, hospital discharge teams, NHS 111 and local authorities; for people who are at risk, vulnerable or have been advised to self-isolate. Referrals should be made via the NHS Volunteer Responders referrers' portal available at <https://www.goodsamapp.org/NHSreferral>.

Once a healthcare professional has made a request for patient support, the request is identified as an active volunteer task to volunteers registered in the local area. The volunteers pick the job they want to do that day and close the task once complete. Volunteers show themselves as 'available' when their app is switched to 'on'. Patients are also able to self-refer by contacting the contact centre directly on 0808 196 3382.

Community pharmacists can utilise this scheme to deliver medicines to patients.

Intra Articular Steroid Injections

Intra-articular steroid injections should be avoided, whenever possible during the COVID-19 pandemic to reduce the risk of reduced immunity to viral exposure. Patients with complex medical conditions should be reviewed by the relevant specialist clinical teams before a decision is made on the suitability of steroid injection during the pandemic. Some conditions will necessitate the continued use of steroids but need to be agreed on an individual basis balancing risks and benefits. For more information, see the guidance from the [Faculty of Pain Medicine](#) and [British Society of Skeletal Radiologists](#).

Community Pharmacy Update

Due to social distancing, pharmacies have to limit the number of patients on their premises at any one time; which means that patients will be asked to queue outside. In addition to this, if under significant pressure, at the discretion of the responsible pharmacist, community pharmacies may close their doors to the public for up to 2.5 hours a day according to new NHSE guidance to catch up on their workload if they are not doing so already.

Pharmacies are already beginning to notice medication shortages; which is affecting the length of time prescriptions can be dispensed. NHS England guidelines with regards to prescribing during the COVID-19 epidemic have asked all prescribers not to change repeat prescription durations or support patients trying to stockpile as these actions may put a strain on the supply chain and exacerbate any potential shortages.

Patients can contact pharmacies directly (by phone or text if available) to check whether their prescription is ready to collect to avoid queueing. Some pharmacies have introduced a text messaging service to alert patients accordingly. Pharmacies can now also engage the help of volunteers via the [NHS Volunteer Responders](#) scheme to deliver medicines.

Shortages Notice

Azathioprine tablets	Azathioprine tablets 25mg x 28 (Mylan) are available. Azathioprine tablets 25mg x 100 (Mylan) and Azathioprine Tabs 50mg x 56 (Mylan) are unavailable until early-mid July.
Medroxyprogesterone (Provera) 400mg tablets	Out of stock until mid-June 2020. All other strengths currently available.
Valproate Semisodium (Depakote) 250mg/500mg tablets	Depakote 250mg and 500mg tablets are out of stock until mid-April 2020 with ongoing limited supplies until July 2020.
Betamethasone (Vistamethasone) 0.1% eye drops	Martindale are out of stock until October 2020. RPH Pharma have sufficient supply of Betnesol eye/ear 0.1% drops.
Diamorphine 5mg and 10mg Injections	Accord are out of stock of 5mg and 10mg strengths, with a re-supply date of Summer 2020. Wockhardt are out of 5mg and 10mg strengths with limited supplies expected to be available w/c 6th April 2020. The advice from both suppliers is that the supply will remain unpredictable for the foreseeable future. Diamorphine hydrochloride 30mg, 100mg, 500mg are available but manufacturers are unable to support an increase in demand on these strengths. Sufficient supplies of morphine sulfate 10mg/ml injection are available from Ethypharm and Hameln to support the diamorphine shortage. The Hameln presentation is preservative free.