

As a team we want to support all practices and prescribers during this challenging time. Please let us know if you are identifying medication issues you need us to try and resolve. We have a direct link into the national team who want us to escalate all potential medication issues.

The following advice was provided as part of the attached bulletin last week. I felt it would be helpful to provide some follow up/ emphasis from an East Kent perspective –provided in red.

1. **Practices should not change their repeat prescription durations or support patients trying to stockpile as these actions will put a strain on the supply chain and exacerbate any potential shortages.**
2. **Practices should also consider putting all suitable patients on electronic repeat dispensing as soon as possible. The whole repeatable prescription can be valid for a year but each repeat should be for no longer than the patient has now. For example, if the patient has prescriptions for a month's supply now then the repeat dispensing should be set up as 13 x 28 days' supply.**

These two issues link together. It is really important that we don't disrupt an already fragile supply chain by changing prescribing quantities or patterns. The national view is that implementation of electronic repeat dispensing for patients on stable medication regimes is the best approach to ensure that patients can access to their repeat medication over the next few months, and to minimise repeat prescribing workload in primary care. The team are finalising an implementation plan today and will be contacting practices to offer help on Tuesday 24th March. This is a support offer to you so please let us know how we can be most useful.

3. **Please do not advise that the pharmacy will be delivering – ask patients to check with pharmacy directly to clarify the situation with home deliveries.**

We have escalated the medication home delivery issue to a national level as we know this is a significant problem. Unfortunately the Community Pharmacies are also under huge work load pressures with staff sickness and the delivery service for many is not feasible. We understand that there is a national solution planned this week and we will update as soon as we are informed. In the interim we know that there are many people offering to support the vulnerable so we would encourage patients to ask for help from their family, friends and neighbours. Your social prescribers may be able to signpost for help. Please let us know if you are aware of patients who have no one to help.

4. **It is also really important that a patient is not prescribed anything they have not had for a while (especially inhalers) unless there is a true clinical need**

Several practices have approached us with regard to the ordering of inhalers by patients who have not needed them for some time. It is obviously up to individual practices to decide on an approach but having shared the issue on a national CCG forum it is clear that there are concerns about the adverse effect on the supply chain of supplying these patients. We appreciate that taking time to undertake a clinical assessment for these patients is time consuming in the current situation but if possible it is being recommended that practice nurses or PCN Pharmacy staff undertake a clinical assessment using NICE guidance for management of asthma - asking why they are suddenly requesting an inhaler and what symptoms they have to ascertain whether they really need an inhaler. If their symptoms warrant prescribing then the inhaler should be provided in line with current asthma guidance taking into account that the patient may need to be assessed for possible COVID-19 symptoms under PPE protection at "hot" sites.

Paracetamol

This wasn't in the K&M bulletin but we have been advised that as part of the COVID-19 incident response Pharmacists have just been given approval by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society to pack paracetamol down from dispensing packs and sell to patients. However they will have to be cautious with their stocks to avoid supply problems for patients who require it on repeat prescription. This should help reduce requests for "as required" prescriptions. Just to reiterate that we have been advised that there isn't a national shortage and there is plenty in the supply chain. <https://www.rpharms.com/about-us/news/details/Packing-down-paracetamol>