

**NHS Board Directors of Pharmacy
NHS Board Primary Care Leads
GP Practices
Community Pharmacy Contractors**



Copy:
NHS Board Chief Executives

30 July 2012

Dear Colleague,

Managed Repeat / Express Repeat Prescription Schemes

It has been brought to our attention that a number of community pharmacy companies are advertising and offering schemes where they will encourage patients to sign an agreement for the pharmacy company to automatically order repeat prescriptions on behalf of the patient.

These schemes are **not** part of NHS pharmaceutical services, have no authority in NHS Scotland and represent a non-NHS initiative by the individual pharmacy companies concerned.

We are receiving a growing number of complaints from NHS Boards representatives and GP practices who have concerns about the working processes and potential for waste generated by these schemes. Examples include: complaints from patients that they have been dispensed medication that they do not need; orders for patients who are in hospital or who have died; repeat prescription requests being made for patients eight weeks in advance of them requiring their medication; and in some instances requests for medication that has been discontinued since the previous request.

Not only do these examples illustrate the unnecessary additional work created for the GP practice, the risk of increasing the waste associated with repeat prescribing and the potential to cause harm to patients, they also introduce an information governance issue. This occurs because the GP practice record may no longer accurately reflect the actual items that are required by the patient; in some cases they reflect the items requested by the pharmacy not all of which are dispensed; particularly in the case of 'when required' medicines. This impacts on the quality of the data held in the GP practice and subsequently available to other data sources such as the Emergency Care Summary (ECS).

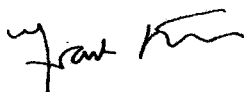
Another concern of these schemes is that they do not support the health policy of encouraging patients, wherever possible, to take responsibility for their own care to self manage their medicines, including ordering them. That said we do recognise the valuable role that many community pharmacists play in helping to support vulnerable and house-bound patients, particularly those using compliance aids. In exceptional circumstances where the patient or their carer is unable to order their medicines, there may be a case to be made for pharmacy staff to undertake the ordering with the patient's or carer's permission and agreement of the GP until alternative arrangements can be made.

These private schemes should not be confused with the NHS Chronic Medication Service and the developing serial prescribing/dispensing elements of this service. In Scotland, the Scottish Government Health Directorate is currently working with a number of GPs and community pharmacists to undertake the Early Adopter (EA) phase of the serial prescribing and dispensing element of the Chronic Medication Service (CMS) as part of the NHS community pharmacy contract.

Under CMS the provision of a serial prescription will be under the control of the individual patient's GP. A Circular will be issued in due course outlining the plans for the national roll-out and implementation of this component of CMS to all GP practices and community pharmacies. It will still be for GPs to determine the suitability of an individual patient for serial prescribing and dispensing.

It is the view of the Scottish Government Health Directorates, NHS Boards and the Scottish General Practitioners Committee that GP practices should not feel obliged to sign up to or endorse individual company schemes and wherever possible patients should be encouraged to take responsibility for the ordering of their own repeat prescriptions. In addition, pharmacists should not promote these schemes nor should pharmacy owners who have arrangements with the NHS to provide pharmaceutical services set any incentives for pharmacists to encourage patients to sign up for such schemes.

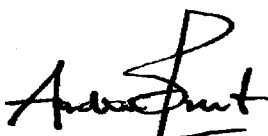
Yours sincerely



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