

Guidance for prescribers when patients access both NHS and private services

Requests to issue NHS prescriptions for medicines recommended after private consultations are increasingly being made. Prescribers are often unsure when it is appropriate to issue NHS prescriptions when these requests are made. Prescribers can issue private prescriptions to NHS patients for some groups of medicines. This briefing provides advice on the appropriate issue of:

- NHS prescriptions after private consultation.
- Private prescriptions to NHS patients.

Recommendations

- Patients are permitted to re-enter the NHS pathway following any private consultation.
- Make sure there is good communication between prescribers and clinicians that undertake private consultations.
- Prescribers should seek advice from the clinicians providing a private service if they are uncertain about taking clinical responsibility for prescribing and monitoring. Additional training may be needed.
- Ensure reasons for not issuing an NHS prescription or switching to an alternative medicine are discussed with the patient and they understand the decision.
- The following items are not permitted to be prescribed on the NHS and therefore should not be prescribed, or only be prescribed via a private prescription:
 - » Blacklisted items
 - » Malaria prophylaxis
 - » Travel vaccinations that are not permitted on the NHS
 - » SLS items prescribed outside of their ACBS criteria
- Do not routinely issue an NHS prescription following a private consultation if the medicine is:
 - » Not included in the local NHS pathway
 - » Not included in the local drug formulary
 - » Only suitable for specialist/specialised prescribing
 - » Included further down the NHS treatment pathway after other alternatives which the patient is suitable for but has not tried
- Prescribers should be aware of groups of medicines that may be provided on a private prescription for NHS patients.
- Prescribers cannot issue private prescriptions to their registered NHS patients for items that are cheaper than an NHS prescription charge or for branded medicines where there is no clinical reason that a generic medicine cannot be prescribed.

If a patient requests a brand but there is no clinical reason why the generic should not be prescribed, a GP may not issue a private prescription for the branded medicine as this would be a breach of the GMS contract regulation.⁵

References

1. Department of Health. Guidance on NHS patients who wish to pay for additional private care. 23 March 2009. Gateway reference: 11512. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/404423/patients-add-priv-care.pdf
2. Department of Health and Social Care. NHS Constitution for England. Last updated March 2022. https://www.gmc-uk.org/-/media/documents/prescribing-guidance-updated-english-20210405_pdf-85260533.pdf
3. British Medical Association. The doctor-patient relationship toolkit. 26 April 2023. <https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/ethics/doctor-patient-relationship/doctor-patient-relationship>
4. National Health Service, England. The National Health Service (General Medical Services Contracts) Regulations 2004 Statutory Instruments No. 291. http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2004/291/pdfs/uksi_20040291_en.pdf
5. British Medical Association (BMA). Prescribing in general practice. April 2018. <https://www.bma.org.uk/media/1563/bma-prescribing-in-general-practice-april-2018.pdf>
6. Joint Formulary Committee. British National Formulary (online) London: BMJ Group and Pharmaceutical Press. <https://www.nice.org.uk> accessed on 30/11/23.
7. PrescQIPP Bulletin 316 - Travel vaccines. 2.0, December 2022. <https://www.prescqipp.info/our-resources/bulletins/bulletin-316-travel-vaccines/>
8. NHS Business Services Authority. Drug Tariff December 2023. <https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/pharmacies-gp-practices-and-appliance-contractors/drug-tariff>

| | | |
|--------------------------------|----------|---|
| Additional resources available | Bulletin | https://www.prescqipp.info/our-resources/bulletins/bulletin-238-prescribing-on-the-nhs-following-a-private-consultation/ |
| | Tools | |

Support with any queries or comments related to the content of this document is available through the PrescQIPP help centre <https://help.prescqipp.info>

This document represents the view of PrescQIPP CIC at the time of publication, which was arrived at after careful consideration of the referenced evidence, and in accordance with PrescQIPP's quality assurance framework.

The use and application of this guidance does not override the individual responsibility of health and social care professionals to make decisions appropriate to local need and the circumstances of individual patients (in consultation with the patient and/or guardian or carer). [Terms and conditions](#)