



- **Getting better value from the NHS drug budget**

A [BMJ article](#) proposes innovative ways of restructuring healthcare prescribing to get better value for money from the NHS drug budget. It suggests that more efficient use of the most cost-effective medicines could save the NHS more than £1 billion per year. Although some of the suggestions are quite radical and not as simple to implement as the article appears to imply, many of the ideas will come as no surprise to healthcare professionals in Northamptonshire. The NPCi blog provides a useful overview. <http://www.npci.org.uk/blog/?p=2294>

- **Revised PCT drugs formulary**

The recently revised (January 2011) primary care drugs formulary can be found on Pathfinder at [PCT Formulary](#) and on the intranet at [PCT Formulary](#)

Hard copies will not be produced this time but the online version will be a live document, which be updated regularly. Practices are advised to ensure that their clinical systems reflect the current formulary; the locality Prescribing Advisers and Prescribing Support Technicians can assist with this.

- **Safer use of lithium**

A significant number of practices have requested lithium record books following the Tablet Press Extra on the "Safer Use of Lithium" (December 2010) in response to the NPSA patient safety alert. A further order for books has been placed by the PCT, so any practices still wishing to have the books should contact Sue Barron with their request as soon as possible. Please note that practices only need to order sufficient books to provide to their existing patients as NHFT will supply books for new patients. [Susan.Barron@northants.nhs.uk](mailto:Susan.Barron@northants.nhs.uk) or telephone 01604 651359

- **Management of infection for primary care prescribers**

The Health Protection Agency guidance document on "management of infection guidance for primary care prescribers" has been up-dated and the NHS Northamptonshire adaptation of this document is now available on Pathfinder at [NHSN antimicrobial guidance](#) or on the intranet at [NHSN antimicrobial guidance](#). The guidance now contains links to Clinical Knowledge Summaries which prescribers may find useful for providing the patient with an appropriate information leaflet.

- **Choice of A2RA**

Losartan is now off patent and the Drug Tariff price has fallen considerably over recent months. If an A2RA drug is indicated (see [Tablet Press Extra RAS drugs](#)) for hypertension (including in patients with diabetes or renal disease) then losartan would now be the A2RA of choice. However, a recent observational study from Sweden suggests that candesartan is superior to losartan in heart failure. Despite the limitations inherent in observational data, prescribers are therefore advised to use candesartan in preference to losartan in heart failure. See <http://www.npci.org.uk/blog/?p=2396> for further details.

- **Changes to symptom management guidelines for the last days of life**

The Liverpool Care Pathway (LCP) has been updated nationally and Version 12 is due to be launched across all healthcare settings in Northamptonshire on the 21<sup>st</sup> February 2011.

In line with this the LCP Symptom Management Guidelines have been reviewed by the LNR Cancer Network:

- Recommended first line treatment of respiratory tract secretions is glycopyrronium (200mcg every 4hrs). This is because of a series of adverse reactions to hyoscine, namely deteriorating confusion and agitation; glycopyrronium has less CNS side effects and is lower in cost.
- Subcutaneous PRN dose of haloperidol has been reduced from 2.5mg to 1.5mg for use with morphine or diamorphine, as the lower dose of haloperidol was found to have fewer side effects.

If you require further information please contact Michelle Berwick (End of Life Care Facilitator)

[michelle.berwick@northants.nhs.uk](mailto:michelle.berwick@northants.nhs.uk) or Dr David Riley (Consultant in Palliative Medicine)

The documents relating to the LCP can be found on Pathfinder at [End of Life Guidelines](#)

- **Warfarin suspension**

A licensed warfarin sodium oral suspension (1mg/1ml) is now available in the UK from Rosemont Pharmaceuticals Limited at a price of £55 plus VAT for 150ml pack size.

This edition is also available on HNN (Health Network Northants)

<http://www.northants.nhs.uk/Display/Dynamic.jsp?topid=14070&lhsid=514&oid=2854&currentid=2854>

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