Prescribing Guidance for Practices Regarding NHS Patients Travelling Abroad

1. NHS Patients travelling for three months or less:

1.1 Pre-existing condition

- Provide sufficient medication to cover the journey and to allow the patient to obtain medical attention abroad.
  - A 28 day prescription is sufficient. If additional medication is required, advise the patient to register with a local doctor once abroad. A prescription should not be issued for patients who are already abroad.
- In exceptional cases e.g. where the patient is constantly travelling and will be unable to register with a local doctor, issue up to a maximum of 3 months' supply. Please note that where medication requires frequent monitoring for example warfarin, it may not be appropriate to prescribe for such an extended period.

1.2 Just-in-case Treatments

- GPs should not prescribe on the NHS any medication which is requested solely in anticipation of the onset of an ailment whilst outside the UK, but for which treatment is not required at the time of prescribing (e.g. travel sickness, altitude sickness, antibiotics or rehydration sachets for diarrhoea).
- Patients should be advised to purchase these items where possible. A private prescription may be provided for any prescription-only medicines (a charge may be levied for writing a private prescription for such pre-emptive medication). For conditions unresponsive to self-medication, the patient should normally seek medical attention abroad.

Nb. Many UK prescription only medicines are available to purchase without a prescription abroad.

2. NHS patients living or travelling abroad for more than three months of the year

- Provide sufficient medication to cover the journey and to allow the patient to obtain medical attention abroad.
  - A 28 day prescription is sufficient.
- The patient should be advised to register with a local doctor for continuing medication; this may need to be paid for by the patient.
- The patient should check with the manufacturer that the medicines required are available in the country being visited.
- GMS regulations state that patients should be removed from the GP practice list by the NHS England Area Team where notification has been received from the patient that they intend to be away from the UK for a period of at least 3 months.
- Patients carrying prescribed controlled drugs abroad for their own personal use may require a personal license (see below).
3. Taking controlled drugs abroad

Patients travelling abroad with controlled drugs, irrespective of the duration of travel, are advised to carry a letter, issued by the prescribing doctor or drug worker, containing the following information:

- The patient's name, address and date of birth.
- The outward and return dates of travel.
- The country being visited.
- List of drugs being carried, including dosages and total amounts.

GP practices may charge for the provision of this letter

Travellers will require a personal import or export licence to carry controlled drugs if:

- They are travelling for three calendar months or more.
- Are carrying more than three months' supply.

Any person travelling for less than three months and carrying less than 3 months supply of controlled drugs will not need a personal import or export licence to enter or leave the UK.

A personal licence has no legal standing outside the UK and is intended to assist travellers passing through UK customs controls with their prescribed controlled drugs.

Travellers are advised to contact the embassy, consulate or high commission of the country of destination (or any country through which they may be travelling) regarding the legal status and local policy on the importation of controlled drugs.

Patients should be advised that controlled drugs should be:

- Carried in original packaging.
- Carried in hand luggage (airline regulations permitting).
- Carried with a valid personal import/export licence (if necessary).
- Carried with a letter from the prescribing doctor (see above)

4. Malaria prophylaxis

GPs must NOT prescribe medicines to prevent malaria on the NHS.

- Patients should be advised to purchase prophylaxis over the counter where possible.
- Prescription only medicines should be prescribed on a private prescription (the practice is able to charge for the provision of a private prescription)

5. References


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