

When is it Appropriate to Use A Patient Group Direction?

Prescribing tip for information

What is a Patient Group Direction?

Patient Group Directions (PGDs) are written instructions that allow the supply or administration of medicines to patients, usually in planned circumstances. They take a significant amount of time and resource to develop and implement.

PGDs allow certain groups of non-prescribing healthcare professionals to:

- supply and administer specified medicines
- to pre-defined groups of patients,
- without a prescription.

Before PGDs are developed all the available options for supplying and/or administering medicines in a specific clinical situation are explored since PGDs are usually reserved for limited situations in which they offer an advantage for patient care, without compromising patient safety, and where there are clear governance arrangements and accountability.

Alternatives to a PGD:

The preferred way for patients to receive medicines is for a prescriber to provide care for an individual patient on a one-to-one basis i.e. a Patient Specific Direction (PSD). In primary care this is usually via a prescription or it may be a written or electronic instruction from the GP in the patient record, relating specifically to that patient. In a secondary care setting a PSD is usually the patient's drug chart or a written instruction in the patient's notes.

PGD or PSD?

There are many situations that render a PGD inappropriate such as where most patients in a service have complex clinical needs or require assessments at different stages of the care pathway. Furthermore, medicines that require frequent dosage adjustments or frequent or complex monitoring should not be included in a PGD.

Examples of where a PGD would be appropriate to use, since assessment and treatment follows a clearly predictable pattern:

- ✓ immunisation
- ✓ family planning services

Examples of where a PSD would be appropriate to use:

- ✓ administration of a drug specified in a letter from secondary care e.g. for Clexane or Zoladex. (Here the signed hospital letter would be regarded as a PSD, and provided the person administering was suitably trained to do so and they were satisfied that the letter contained sufficient details of the drug and dosage, they would be able to administer the item).
- ✓ administration of vaccinations for named patients, as well as items such as Depo-Provera or vitamin B12 injections.

More information on PGDs & PSDs can be found at the following links:

<https://www.sps.nhs.uk/articles/quality-pgds-7-steps-to-success/>

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/mpg2>

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