**Prescribing Tip For Information**

**BRIDGING SCRIPTS**

GP practices should ensure that they have a clear written process for prescribing and issuing prescriptions, including bridging scripts, for their patients who live in care homes. **A bridging script is a prescription for a separate supply of medication that is needed by the care home before the next medicines cycle begins**. Mid-cycle requests may be requested for a number of reasons, such as:

* new residents.
* when a new medication is prescribed for the first time, including from hospital.
* for medicines which have been dropped, spilled or refused by the resident.
* where additional quantities are required due to increased usage (e.g. analgesics) or dose increases.

The ordering of medicines in a care home is done on a rolling cycle. Each medicine cycle is 28 days long and Day One of Week One is the day that the care home starts using the new supply of medicines. Orders for the following month are placed in Week Two to allow time for GP practices to issue prescriptions and the pharmacy to then dispense and deliver the medicines. Bridging scripts can cause a lot of confusion as a month’s supply may have already been issued ready for the next medicines cycle. However, an extra supply will still be required until the next cycle starts.

**A proforma to request bridging prescriptions** and a **Medicines Ordering Cycle Calendar** are both useful resources which are available from the MOCH team (see below for contact details). Dates should be filled in each column on the calendar by the care home and the practice and then shared with the pharmacy. Adjustments to dates may need to be made to work around Bank Holidays.

A bridging or interim request will ensure there is sufficient medication to complete the current cycle, synchronise to the 28-day cycle and avoid waste. This request may be for quantities of medication to complete the cycle as well as a further 28 days’ supply. For example, the home may request a prescription for 37 tablets, 9 days bridging request PLUS 28 days for the next monthly cycle totalling 37 tablets.

The practice should inform the pharmacy that the bridging script is urgent and the full month’s supply is for the next cycle. If the wrong quantity is ordered or supplied, then the medicine will continue to be out of synch every month until it is corrected with a further bridging script. **Follow prescribing tip 438 (issued 16.5.24)** for guidance on issuing a one-off prescription so that the quantity is left unchanged on Emis.

It is very important that the home, practice and pharmacy have designated leads and limited number of staff should be involved in the generation of care home prescriptions. This ensures everyone plays their part and is accountable. The effective management of medicines in care homes through robust systems and effective communication between everyone involved will improve patient care and reduce potential medicines-related harms. It also presents the opportunity to streamline processes and reduce waste.

**For further resources please contact the Medicines Optimisation Care Home Team (MOCH) on** moch.team@nhs.net

**To contact the Medicines Optimisation Team please phone 01772 504850**

**If you have any suggestions for future topics to cover in our prescribing tips please contact** **Nicola.schaffel@nhs.net**

**All content accurate and correct on the date of issue of this tip.**