NON-MEDICAL PRESCRIBING
Information for patients

What is non-medical prescribing?

Non-medical prescribing, is undertaken by a health professional who is not a doctor. It concerns any medicine prescribed for health conditions within the health professional’s field of expertise. Research has shown that non-medical prescribing has improved the quality of service to patients; there is evidence of not just greater convenience but also of improved clinical outcomes.

Nurses, pharmacists and other health professionals, such as radiographers, who prescribe are highly skilled in their specialist area. They will have undergone appropriate and ongoing training and be as competent to prescribe as a doctor. They are required to demonstrate that they can undertake physical examination and history taking, in addition to possessing assessment and diagnostic skills in the specialist area in which they will prescribe. The training course is intensive and involves a theory and calculations exam. Once the prescriber has qualified, they are required to undertake and record continual development in their area of prescribing to ensure that they keep up to date.

How does non-medical prescribing differ from medical prescribing?

Non-medical prescribing places the patient at the centre of their care. A nurse or pharmacist will have been trained to explain fully to the patient what the medicine is for and how it should be taken. The non-medical prescriber will ensure that patients gain improved access to information and advice which helps with understanding the decisions made about their health and care. The aim is to understand the patient’s experience and attitude to illness and treatment; this is achieved by allowing time for the patient to ask questions, so that if the patient agrees that the medicine is needed, they will be more likely to use it correctly.
Why introduce non-medical prescribing?

As part of the reformation of the NHS, the Department of Health has planned to increase the number of prescribers so that patients receive a fast, more efficient service with improved continuity of care. It is becoming more likely that as a patient you will meet a non-medical prescriber either at your GP surgery or whilst being treated in the hospital. The independent prescriber may help to manage your diabetes, asthma or blood pressure for example, and will help to make your visit smoother and quicker by being able to prescribe your medicines; or may help you with a prescription if needed as part of a minor illness clinic.

Need further information?

For further information please speak to your independent prescriber or contact:
Jacqueline Walker, Deputy Director of Nursing on 01895 279534

The following websites produce regular updates on developments in non-medical prescribing:

National Prescribing Centre www.npc.nhs.uk
Department of Health www.dh.gov.uk
Nursing and Midwifery Council www.nmc-uk.org
Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain www.rpsgb-uk.org
Medicines and Healthcare Regulatory Agency www.mhra.gov.uk
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