Supporting Information: Prescribing of Generic Medicines

The Department of Health continues to support the increased use of generic medicines, recognising that there are still some more cost savings to be made in this area. Generic medicines can cost up to 80% less and they also give pharmacies and dispensing practices the widest choice of products to dispense. This can be important, particularly if there is a shortage of a particular brand.

Guildford & Waverley Clinical Commissioning Group (G&W CCG) support the prescribing of medicines by their generic* name rather than the brand name. *NB. There are circumstances where it is important to continue prescribing by brand e.g. certain medicines for epilepsy. Please refer to the G&W CCG ‘When to Prescribe by Brand’ guidance which is available on the PAD (Prescribing Advisory Database).

The GP NHS terms of service require that a patient receives an NHS prescription where a treatment is clinically necessary. If a patient requests a particular branded product, despite local NHS policy to prescribe generically, the GP may issue a private prescription but must note the following:

- An NHS prescription must be offered. The view of the Surrey Medicines Commissioning Group and the G&W CCG Medicines Optimisation Group is that the NHS prescription should be generically prescribed
- The patient can choose whether to accept the NHS or private prescription. If the private prescription is chosen then this should be clearly documented in the patients notes
- The private prescription can be written generically and the patient should be informed to request the branded equivalent at the point of dispensing. This negates the need to enter the branded drug onto the patients clinical notes and thus avoid the risk of the branded product accidentally appearing on subsequent NHS prescriptions
- The patient should be informed* that the pharmacist will charge them accordingly
- The prescriber must NOT levy a charge for the issue of a private prescription under these circumstances

* Please find below a sample patient letter.

Patients’ can therefore be offered a choice as to whether to have a generic prescription on the NHS or to choose to pay for a branded drug. The GP should issue the private prescription using the generic name as the pharmacist has the flexibility to offer the branded drug and to charge accordingly.

This information is extracted from section 8.7.1 of the G&W CCG Medicines Management Guide to Prescribing and is available on the PAD.
Dear ~[Title] ~[Surname]  

NHS No: ~[NHS Number]

Please be aware that your doctor will in future be prescribing what are called 'generic' medicines rather than the more expensive branded versions. This will only be done where there is no clinical difference in the effectiveness of the drug. Prescribing generic medicines will save a very large amount of money for the NHS and these savings will be used to improve health services locally.

The generic drug will only be given, where there is no clinical difference with the branded product; however, there are some circumstances where it is important to continue prescribing by brand, and the branded medicine will continue to be prescribed e.g. certain medicines for epilepsy.

If for some reason you wish to continue with your existing brand when a suitable alternative generic version is available you will be able to do so but will have to pay the full cost of the medicine even if you normally do not pay for prescriptions. To obtain the branded drug you will need to ask your GP to provide a private prescription (which will still be written with the generic name; however you can request the brand at the point where you have the prescription dispensed at the pharmacy). There will be no charge for the writing of this prescription but the pharmacy will charge the full commercial cost of the medicine dispensed (it may be useful prior to having the prescription dispensed that the price is requested from the pharmacy for the branded version).

I hope this is clear and that you support this move to maximise the value of NHS spending but if you have any questions please contact your GP.

Yours sincerely

~[Registered Doctor]