

Position statement on the prescribing of branded generic medication

NHS Norfolk and Suffolk ICB do not support the routine prescribing of branded generic medication in primary care, except where a clinical reason means that it is safer to prescribe by brand.

Rationale

- After dispensing medication, pharmacies and dispensing practices are reimbursed based on the prices in the NHS Drug Tariff. The Department of Health & Social Care (DHSC) sets the reimbursement price for Category M medicines in the Drug Tariff based on cost data from manufacturers.¹ **Category M** prices are intentionally set at a level to include an element of purchase profit as a necessary part of the contract funding for dispensing organisations.
- Branded generics are generic medicines with a manufacturer-assigned brand name. To gain market share, manufacturers sometimes price them lower than equivalent Category M generics.² Lower prices may not be sustained, necessitating repeated patient reviews - both inconvenient and time-consuming.
- Prescribing branded generics disrupts the competitive market that would otherwise drive down prices in the generics market and conversely acts to drive up costs to the NHS overall. This impacts the funding mechanisms for dispensing, leading to reduced reimbursement for dispensing contractors, potentially having implications on their continued viability. Switching between generic and branded generic prescriptions can be confusing for patients, carers, and healthcare providers in various settings. Consistently prescribing generics improves familiarity.³

Benefits of generic prescribing

- **Better Value:** Competition to obtain generics at the lowest price, drives down the prices charged by wholesalers and manufacturers and in turn the Drug Tariff reimbursement prices and costs for the NHS overall.
- **Better Supply:** Enables quicker patient access to medicines, as generics are more readily available than branded generics. Evidence suggests that some branded generics can quickly become scarce, causing delays in patient access.³
- **Lower Risk:** Reduces the risk of prescribing or dispensing errors as each generic medicine has only one approved International Non-Proprietary Name (INN) name, rather than several brand names.⁴

Guidance for clinicians

- Prescribe generically unless there is a clinical reason why it is safer to prescribe by brand, for example inhalers, opioids (patches & modified release preparations), antiseizure medication, lithium, insulins, diltiazem, adrenaline, immunosuppressants used in organ transplants.
- The Specialist Pharmacy Service has published a [document](#) listing medicines which, for clinical reasons should be prescribed by brand. This list is not exhaustive but provides a good starting point.⁵
- All ICB formulary documents will stipulate where a medicine is recommended to be prescribed by brand, and detail which ones.
- All patients, regardless of whether they are dispensing patients or non-dispensing patients should be prescribed generic medicines in line with this position statement.
- Patients currently prescribed branded generics for no clinical reason do not need to be proactively switched to generics, however, this should be considered at the patients next medication review.

- Patients should be counselled on all medication switches. Any large-scale changes to the choice of medication should be discussed with local community pharmacy colleagues to ensure stock is not wasted.
- Where branded medicines are justified, the ICB preferred choice of branded medication should be prescribed where possible.
- Prescribing software (OptimiseRx/ScriptSwitch) messages will reflect this position statement.

References

1. [What are the drug categories of drugs in the Drug Tariff?](#) NHSBSA
2. [Bulletin 290: Branded generic medicines, PrescQIPP](#)
3. [Branded Generics. Community Pharmacy England](#)
4. [Prescribing by generic or brand name in primary care.](#) Specialist Pharmacy Service
5. [Example medicines to prescribe by brand name in primary care.](#) Specialist Pharmacy Service