NHS
Suffolk and
North East Essex

Position Statement for Medicines of Low Value

RUBEFACIENTS
(excluding topical NSAIDs and capsaicin)

Summary

The Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Board (SNEE ICB) does not support the prescribing of topical rubefacients in line with NHS England's national guidance on medicines of low clinical value.

Examples of these products include (this list is not exhaustive) Algesal® cream, Balmosa® cream, Deep Freeze® cold gel, Movelat® cream. Please note that this does not include topical NSAIDS or capsaicin.

All rubefacients are classed as "Double Red" i.e., no prescribing in primary or secondary care

There are no patient exceptionalities identified

Rubefacients (excluding topical NSAIDS and capsaicin) are warming muscle rub products with limited evidence of efficacy. They include nicotinate, salicylate, oils or camphor and known brand names include Movelat®, Algesal®, Difflam®, Ralgex®, Deep Heat® etc.

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence's (NICE) clinical guideline on osteoarthritis does not recommend rubefacients for treating osteoarthritis. There is a lack of evidence to support the use of rubefacients in acute or chronic musculoskeletal pain.

DEPRESCRIBING ADVICE

- **Deprescribe rubefacients for all patients who have these products on repeat or acute**
- Patients should be advised of the lack of robust evidence to support its ongoing use and the products are unlikely to help their pain
- Patients should be made aware that these cannot be prescribed by GP practices under any circumstances
- Do not automatically substitute with topical NSAID preparations
- Consider recommending or prescribing an effective alternative treatment if appropriate

Produced by the SNEE ICB Medicines Optimisation Teams (MOT) in collaboration with East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust (ESNEFT) and West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust (WSFT) version 1.0

Approved by the SNEE Integrated Medicines Optimisation Sub-Committee (IMOC) November 2022 for review November 2024

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NEW PATIENTS

- **Do not prescribe rubefacients under any circumstances**
- Patients should be advised of the lack of robust evidence to support its ongoing use and the products are unlikely to help their pain
- Patients should be made aware that these cannot be prescribed by GP practices under any circumstances
- Patients requiring pain relief should be offered appropriate lifestyle advice and/or pharmacological management in line with national/local guidance

FURTHER SUPPORT

- National Patient Information Leaflets have been developed and can be supplied to patients to help support the deprescribing of these products (click here)
- Patients who wish to seek further clarification can be directed to Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) via:
    - E-mail: sneeicb.pals@nhs.net
    - Telephone: 0800 389 6819

Reference

1. NHS England and NHS Clinical Commissioners. (30 November 2017). Items which should not routinely be prescribed in primary care: Guidance for CCGs. NHS England. Retrieved from https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/items-which-should-not-be-routinely-prescribed-in-primary-care-guidance-for-ccgs/
2. PrescQIPP. (2015, October). Rubefacients for the treatment of soft-tissue disorders and topical pain relief (DROP-List). Retrieved from PrescQIPP.

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