NHS
Suffolk and
North East Essex

Position Statement for Medicines of Low Value

PEN NEEDLES >£5/100 FOR PRE-FILLED AND RESUABLE DEVICES

Summary

The Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care System (SNEE ICS) does not support the prescribing of pen needles >£5/100 for the use with prefilled or reusable insulin delivery devices, in line with NHS England's national guidance on medicines of low clinical value.

Pen Needles >£5/100 are classed as "double red" in primary and secondary care.

There are no patient exceptionalities identified for this situation.

Pen needles are available in a complete range of sizes from 4mm to 12mm; different needles will fit different pens; however, some pen needles will fit all major insulin delivery pen devices currently available.

There are many different types of insulin pen needles available at a varying cost from £2.75 to £30.08 for 100.

Rationalising use ensures that the most cost-effective options are used first line.

In addition, the Forum for Injection Technique (FIT) UK considers the **4mm needle to be the safest pen needle** for adults and children regardless of age, gender and Body Mass Index (BMI).

Using needles of a shorter length helps to prevent intramuscular injection of insulin. (IM injection of insulin should be avoided as it can result in unpredictable blood glucose levels). Therefore, needle choice should be the most cost effective 4mm needle.

For patients currently using longer pen needle lengths (8mm, 12mm), it is advisable to change to a shorter needle length (6mm or less) but **only after patient discussion with a healthcare professional**, to ensure they receive advice on the correct injection technique.

Safety Needles

For patients that are not able to self-administer it may be appropriate that a safety needle is used by the health care professional, however this should **not** be provided on prescription[1]. The Health and Safety (Sharp Instruments in Healthcare) Regulations 2013 Guidance for employers and employees states that the employer must substitute traditional, unprotected medical sharps with a 'safer sharp' i.e. safety needle where it reasonably practicable to do so[2].

Exceptions

Safety needles should **only** be prescribed on FP10 in the following exceptional circumstances:

- for use by people who are not health and social care professionals and are not employees in the health and social care sectors, but are administering insulin to a patient e.g., teachers
- where there is a risk of disease transmission and the patient is known to have a blood born virus e.g., HIV, hepatitis

At the time of publishing, the most cost-effective safety needles for exceptional circumstances are GlucoRx® Safety needles.

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DEPRESCRIBING ADVICE[1]

- Review all patients on pen needles >£5/100 and switch to a formulary alternative as below.
- Switch to 4mm needles after discussion with specialist.
- Patients prescribed safety pen needles should be changed to a non-safety formulary alternative unless specific exceptional circumstances apply as above.

NEW PATIENTS

- **Do not prescribe new patients requiring insulin pen needles that cost >£5 per 100 needles.**
  - **Suffolk** preferred pen needles are GlucoRx Carepoint®(multiple gauge and sizes) and GlucoRx Carepoint® Ultra (4mm 32gauge).
  - **North East Essex** preferred pen needle is BD Viva® (multiple gauge and sizes)
- Patients starting insulin will have been counselled on the correct use however the brand of needle initially supplied may be different to what is supplied in primary care.
- Patients should be advised that while a range of needles can be prescribed, the delivery of insulin is not affected.
- The choice of formulary needles is supported by the local diabetes team within each Alliance.

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 PALS on sneeicb.pals@nhs.net or 0800 389 6819 or

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)
Endeavour House
8 Russell Road
Ipswich
IP1 2BX

References

1. NHS England and NHS Clinical Commissioners. Items which should not routinely be prescribed in primary care: Guidance for CCGs. s.l. : NHS England, June 2019.
2. Health and Safety Executive. Health and Safety (Sharp Instruments in Healthcare) Regulations 2013 Guidance for employers and employees

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