

Mark Drakeford AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-490
Ein cyf/Our ref MD/01457/13

William Powell AM
Chair
Petitions Committee

10 July 2013

Dear William,

Thank you for your letter of 26 June on behalf of the Petitions Committee, regarding the inclusion of antiretroviral HIV medicines in the 28 day prescribing rule and for providing a copy of the supporting information provided by the petitioner, Joerg Thieme.

Health Boards in Wales are encouraged to adopt 28-day prescribing period as the standard duration for all prescriptions wherever possible and appropriate. The 28 day prescribing policy is not mandatory and Welsh Government expects Health Boards to give consideration to individual patient needs. Prescribing intervals for all medication should be in line with the medically appropriate needs of the patient.

The changes implemented by the University Hospital of Wales (UHW) regarding the prescribing of antiretroviral HIV medications follows concerns raised in the Health Board around the financial cost of prescribing these high cost medicines and the need to minimise waste. For example, if a patient is given three months supply of an antiretroviral HIV medication and the patient's prescription is changed before the end of the three months - as conditions can change during that period - there is a substantial risk of waste.

One means of reducing waste within NHS, which is currently estimated to be in the region of £15 - 50 million a year in Wales, is to ensure the prescribing interval is clinically appropriate, as this can reduce the risk of medicines waste when a patient's clinical condition/medication changes. The 28 day prescribing policy is recognised by the NHS as achieving the best possible balance between patient convenience, good medical practice and minimising waste.

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Wedi'i argraffu ar bapur wedi'i ailgylchu (100%)

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I recognise, however, that it is important a range of options for receiving medication, other than the patient having to collect it from a hospital pharmacy, should be available. In the case of UHW they are working closely with HIV patients to ensure the needs of each patient are accommodated. There is a choice of delivery for the medicines including:

- Royal Mail
- Collection from post offices
- Collection from the Cardiff Royal Infirmary Pharmacy
- Through a home care package

Until patients are stable they continue to receive monthly supplies. Once stable, UHW have confirmed to me they will work closely with patients to ensure a degree of flexibility in the delivery of their medicines. I expect the hospital to negotiate with individual patients to make sure the delivery mechanism is right for them.

In the particular case of Mr Thieme, I have been advised that the Pharmacy Department at UHW met with him on 26 June to discuss his particular issues and concerns. Consequent to this meeting I understand that Mr Thieme has discussed alternative arrangements for the delivery/collection of his medication with his consultant. I trust Mr Thieme's issues have now been resolved.

I hope this information has been helpful.

Best wishes

Mark.

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