



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Seirbhís Aisíoca Príomhchúraim
Bealach amach 5 an M50
An Bóthar Thuaidh
Fionnghlas
Baile Átha Cliath 11

Health Service Executive
Primary Care Reimbursement Service
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Circular 021/10

23rd September 2010

Dear Doctor,

Re: Prescription Charges for Medical Card Holders

You will be aware of the pressures that have been placed on our services by the national financial position and the consequent challenges presented to the Health Services to continue to deliver the range of services provided. The cost of drugs under the Community Drug Schemes is forecast to be more than €2bn for 2010.

It is recognised that one of the drivers in the escalation of costs in the HSE Drug Spend is the rise in the number of products prescribed per patient. From a quality perspective, it has been shown that patients taking two medicines concomitantly faced a 13% risk of adverse drug-drug reactions, this risk increased to 38% with 4 medicines and to 82% with use of seven or more medicines concomitantly (Ref National Medicines Information Centre Bulletin, Vol 16, No 3, 2010).

The Minister for Health and Children has introduced legislation which provides for a 50 cent charge for medicines and other items that Medical Card Holders get on prescription from pharmacies. For your information please find enclosed copies of PCRS Circular No 020/10 and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) issued to community pharmacies.

It is anticipated that this initiative will alert people to consider whether they already have sufficient quantities of their medicines and do not require a further month's supply. The Primary Care Reimbursement Service already pays upwards of 15,000 fees per month to community pharmacies for their professional intervention in situations where prescribed items are not required. It would be helpful, therefore, if patients' records were reviewed on a regular basis on GP practice computers and updated, where necessary, so that medications no longer required by the patient will not be prescribed.

Doctors are reminded that no more than one month's requirements should be prescribed per calendar month.

Doctors are asked for their cooperation in securing whatever economies are possible without reducing the effectiveness of the service or adversely affecting the best interests of patients.

Yours faithfully,

Patrick Burke
Primary Care Reimbursement Service