



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

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Re Update on Reference Pricing

Dear Doctor,

I wish to update you on the implementation of Generic Substitution and Reference Pricing, which is an essential component of the State's plan to address the cost of medicines in Ireland in comparison to other European Member States.

As you know, the first group of products considered was Atorvastatin which was reference priced nearly six months ago. As at 1 May 14, there are fourteen groups of reference priced products.

These can be broadly categorised into

- (i) Proton Pump Inhibitors- Esomeprazole, Lansoprazole, Pantoprazole, Rabeprazole, Omeprazole
- (ii) Statins - Atorvastatin, Rosuvastatin, Pravastatin, Simvastatin
- (iii) Others - Lercanidipine, Ramipril, Losartan, Quetiapine & Anastrozole

In each case the reference price is significantly lower than previous market prices and products are available at the reference price for patients, thereby facilitating significant cost reductions for both patients and the taxpayer.

The HSE is receiving a small number of queries as to how a Medical Practitioner can invoke the clinical exemption provisions set out in the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013.

Section 13 of the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act, 2013 sets out this requirement:

'When a branded interchangeable medicinal product is prescribed for a patient and the prescriber is satisfied that the medicinal product should, for clinical reasons, be exempted from substitution..., the prescriber shall write, legibly and by hand, 'do not substitute' on the prescription beside the name of the medicinal product.'

It should be noted that there is a legal requirement in the legislation that if exemptions are invoked 'do not substitute' must be hand written. There is also provision in the Act for the Minister for Health to put in place regulations to require that prescribers state the clinical reasons for an exemption. Such regulations have not been put in place to date.

The HSE reimburses pharmacies the notified reference price for the relevant interchangeable products unless the prescribing GP has stated 'do not substitute' in his/her own handwriting on the prescription in respect of the item. This clinical exemption is not available for GP Stock Orders. Only reference priced products will be available on Stock Orders.

If you choose to invoke 'do not substitute' on a GMS Repeat Prescription Form for a GMS patient on long term medication, it should be written on the top copy of the three month prescription against each of the products for which you wish to invoke the exemption. It is important to ensure that 'do not substitute' is clearly legible on all copies of a GMS Repeat Prescription Form to ensure that the clinical exemption provisions are invoked for each dispensing.

Your cooperation in ensuring a smooth transition for patients is appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

Patrick Burke
Primary Care Reimbursement Service