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To: Chief Executives of HSC Trusts
(for distribution to: Medical Directors -
for cascade to all relevant staff
Directors of Nursing - *for cascade to all*
relevant staff
Allied Health Professionals - *for*
cascade to all relevant staff)
General Medical Practices (*for cascade*
to all practice staff including GP
Locums)
Community Pharmacists (*for cascade*
to all pharmacy staff including
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For information:

Chief Executive of Coeliac UK
Coeliac UK local groups in NI including
Mr Derek Thompson Gluten Free
Ireland

Dear Colleague

Over recent weeks, the HSCB Pharmacy and Medicines Management Team has responded to a number of queries from GP practices, regarding local policy for Gluten Free prescribing. This has stemmed from media coverage regarding prescribing policies in other parts of the UK.

I wish to confirm that prescribing policy in N Ireland remains unchanged. HSCB continue to endorse Coeliac UK Guidance for prescribing i.e. only staple foods should be prescribed (as per Table 1):

<https://www.coeliac.org.uk/document-library/378-gluten-free-foods-a-revised-prescribing-guide/?return=/healthcare-professionals/resources/guidance-documents/>

Table 1: Gluten-free foods with Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances (ACBS approval)

Bread/rolls
Breakfast cereals
Crackers and crispbreads
Flour/flour-type mixes
Oats
pasta
Pizza bases

It is recognised that many GP practices have spent considerable effort reviewing their patients on gluten-free products to ensure that prescribing is in line with this guidance. I would like to note my appreciation for the efforts that have been made in this area which has clarified and appropriately optimised what is being supplied via Health Service prescription. This has helped in ensuring that there is a consistency in approach to the prescription of gluten free foods.

It is well documented that adherence to a gluten-free diet is essential for patients with confirmed gluten-sensitive enteropathies e.g. coeliac disease, in the prevention of long-term complications such as osteoporosis or other conditions. To that end the HSCB continues to support the following with regards access to gluten free foods on prescription:

1. All patients should have a confirmed ACBS* recognised diagnosis (coeliac disease, dermatitis herpetiformis or steatorrhoea due to gluten sensitivity).
2. Quantities supplied via prescription should follow recommendations as per Coeliac UK guidance at link above
3. A maximum of one month's supply should be prescribed at a time.
4. Only staple foods (Table 1) should be supplied on prescription as per Coeliac UK guidance. Items which are not consistent with healthy eating advice such as biscuits, cakes, muffins, pasties, sausage rolls should not be supplied on health service prescription (HS21).

Action

- Practices are encouraged to review their prescribing of gluten-free foods to ensure that it falls within these recommendations if this has not already been done recently.
- A review tool for gluten-free prescribing is available on the Primary Care Intranet:

http://primarycare.hscni.net/PharmMM_Resources_Clinical%20Resources.htm#Nutrition

If you have any queries regarding this please contact your local Pharmacy Adviser.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joe Brogan', written in a cursive style.

Joe Brogan

*ACBS – The Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances recommends products on the basis that they may be regarded as drugs for the treatment of specified conditions. Prescriptions issued in accordance with the committee’s advice should be endorsed “ACBS”.