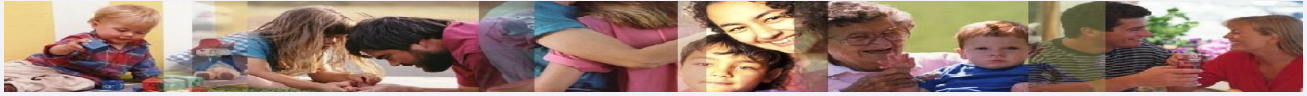


NEWSLETTER



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North Down Levetiracetam Generic Campaign

£1.75 million was spent in NI last year on branded levetiracetam, Keppra[®]. If generic prescribing of levetiracetam in NI increased in line with other parts of the UK, £1.4 million per year would be saved. This report details the review of patients in the North Down federation to switch from Keppra[®] to generic levetiracetam, in line with [MHRA guidance](#) and Department of Health NI policy.

What Happened?

- The Keppra[®] to levetiracetam switch was added to the North Down federation action plan.
- GP practices in the North Down federation were encouraged to review patients on Keppra[®] to consider switching to generic levetiracetam.
- A note was added to the right-hand side of the prescription explaining the rationale for a potential switch to generic levetiracetam.
- Patients had the opportunity to speak to the general practice pharmacist (GPP) by phone to discuss further.
- Patients were advised that hospital Trusts are now supplying generic levetiracetam rather than branded Keppra[®]. This helped to increase patient confidence in switching.
- The progress of the switch was regularly reviewed at practice meetings and learning shared.

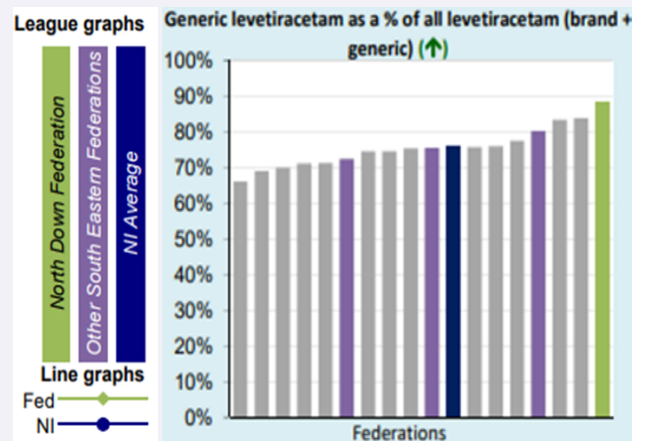
Outcomes

- No seizures reported or negative feedback from patients.
- Significant efficiencies were generated across North Down.
- North Down's levetiracetam generic rate increased to 90% (now the highest in NI).

Action for Prescribers

Refer to Medicines Management Newsletter April 2023 article on a [levetiracetam switch case study](#) in a GP practice and implement suggested actions therein:

1. Review patients currently prescribed the brand Keppra[®] on a case by case basis to consider switching to generic levetiracetam as appropriate and with patient agreement.
2. Resources to support implementation of this [generic switch are available](#).
3. Contact your pharmacy adviser if you would like to be considered for practice support pharmacist (PSP) help with reviewing patients to discuss switching to the generic.



	Keppra [®]	Generic levetiracetam
250mg x 60 tablets	£28.01	£2.11
500mg x 60 tablets	£49.32	£3.37
750mg x 60 tablets	£84.02	£4.39
1g x 60 tablets	£95.34	£6.06

Ref — MIMS, Drug Tariff June 2023

Cost effective vitamin D prescribing

The treatment of vitamin D deficiency occurs in two phases:

1. treatment phase, which is based on fixed loading doses of vitamin D for 6 to 10 weeks and
2. a regular maintenance phase.

For the treatment phase: licensed vitamin D (colecalciferol) preparations should be prescribed, in line with the [NI Formulary](#). Vitamin D products should not be prescribed generically and, where possible, unlicensed products (which are usually expensive “specials”) should not be prescribed. It is also important to include the duration of treatment within the directions for the recommended product.

For the maintenance phase: when the treatment phase has finished and patients are being reviewed with regard to commencing maintenance therapy, prescribers can ask patients to purchase vitamin D supplements over the counter, rather than prescribing them. If self-care is not appropriate and prescribing is required, then it should be in line with the [NI Formulary](#). The most cost-effective product at present is the brand Strivit- D3[®]. Advice regarding dietary sources of vitamin D and lifestyle should always be given to the patient.

Cost effective prescribing of medicines used to treat hyperthyroidism

Carbimazole

Carbimazole is used to treat hyperthyroidism and should be initiated under specialist advice to ensure the correct diagnosis is made and that treatment is appropriate. There are 4 strengths of tablet available but there are large differences in the costs of the various strength. See table below:

Carbimazole costings

(Drug Tariff prices (April 2023))

Carbimazole strength	Pack size	Cost per pack
5mg	100 tablets	£2.61
20mg	100 tablets	£3.25
10mg	100 tablets	£81.32
15mg	100 tablets	£232.38

Action:

Practices with the highest spend were sent Medicines Optimisation email on 9th June:

- To be cost effective, prescribers should consider prescribing doses in multiples of 5mg or 20mg, as appropriate, for new patients.
- For those existing patients, where a higher tablet burden is manageable, practices should consider changing doses to multiples of either 5mg or 20mg.

Propylthiouracil

Propylthiouracil may be an alternative for patients who suffer sensitivity reactions to carbimazole. There are 3 strengths of tablet available but there are large differences in the costs of the various strength. See table below:

Propylthiouracil costings

(Drug Tariff prices (April 2023))

Propylthiouracil strength	Pack size	Cost per pack
25mg	56 tablets	£74.58
50mg	56 tablets	£5.05
100mg	56 tablets	£46.71

Action:

Practices with the highest spend were sent Medicines Optimisation email on 9th June:

- To be cost effective, prescribers should consider prescribing doses in multiples of 50mg, as appropriate, for new patients.
- For those existing patients, where a higher tablet burden is manageable, practices should consider changing doses to multiples of 50mg.

NICE GUIDANCE — RECENTLY PUBLISHED

[NICE TA876](#) (revised) — Nivolumab with chemotherapy for neoadjuvant treatment of resectable non-small-cell lung cancer

[NICE TA885](#) — Pembrolizumab plus chemotherapy with or without bevacizumab for persistent, recurrent or metastatic cervical cancer

[NICE TA886](#) — Olaparib for adjuvant treatment of BRCA mutation-positive HER2-negative high-risk early breast cancer after chemotherapy

[NICE TA887](#) — Olaparib for previously treated BRCA mutation-positive hormone-relapsed metastatic prostate cancer

[NICE TA888](#) — Risankizumab for previously treated moderately to severely active Crohn's disease

[NICE TA890](#) — Difelikefalin for treating pruritus in people having haemodialysis

MANAGED ENTRY

See [Managed Entry section](#) of NI Formulary

No Managed Entry decisions this month

This newsletter has been produced for GPs and pharmacists by the Regional Pharmacy and Medicines Management Team. If you have any queries or require further information on the contents, please contact one of the [Pharmacy Advisors](#)

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