**PRESCRIBING UPDATE**

NHS England issue guidance on conditions for which over the counter medicines should not be prescribed by GPs.

It is 70 years since the inception of the NHS in 1948 and the benefit of this system to the UK population’s health is highly appreciated.

It was quickly realised that a universal health care system which provided absolutely anything and everything free was unaffordable, with some charges being brought in quite quickly (dental care / optician’s examinations and glasses / prescription charges)

With an aging population and ever increasing new and improved treatments, the NHS needs to review how it can continue to provide care where most needed with an affordable tax cost.

With this in mind, NHS England has reviewed the amount spent on medicines of limited clinical value and medicines available over the counter without prescription for minor and self-limiting conditions. Many people will already consider a trip to the pharmacy in such instances and buy something with or without a pharmacist’s advice.

The annual cost of these medicines, along with the cost of seeing a GP and the processing of a prescription is staggering. Examples include £7.5 million for indigestion, £48.1 million for vitamins and mineral supplements and £38.2 million for minor pain / fever / sprains etc.

There are however certain conditions where medication used occasionally, is required regularly (for example indigestion due to a proven change in the gullet which may be precancerous or vitamin supplements for osteoporosis). These cases will not be affected by the new guidance.

It is expected that GPs will not prescribe medication available over the counter, for the following conditions: -

Acute Sore Throat

Minor Cold sores of the lips

Conjunctivitis

Coughs, colds and nasal congestion

Cradle Cap

Haemorrhoids (piles)

Infant colic

Mild cystitis

Mild irritant dermatitis

Dandruff

Diarrhoea (adults)

Dry eyes / sore tired eyes

Earwax

Excessive sweating

Head lice

Indigestion

Infrequent constipation

Infrequent Migraine

Insect bites and stings

Mild acne

Mild dry skin

Sun Protection

Mild to moderate hay fever

Minor burns and scolds

Minor pain / fever

Mouth Ulcers

Nappy rash

Oral thrush

Prevention of dental decay (high strength toothpaste)

Ringworm / athletes foot

Teething / toothache

Threadworms

Travel sickness

Warts and verrucae

Quorn Medical Centre prides itself on having good access for patients to obtain advice by phone or be seen by a GP as needed. This service is sometimes put under pressure and sometimes patients do call for advice or treatment for some of these conditions.

NHS England has now decreed that we should not be prescribing in these cases, unless a patient has taken a Pharmacist’s advice and been using a treatment for a reasonable period. As a result we will now be directing more patients to purchase medications than previously.

We will also be stopping some repeat prescriptions (for example for hay fever)

We hope that patients will understand this and appreciate that this will help both the NHS nationally and preserve the access to and viability of Quorn Medical Centre.

Dr Chris Barlow