

Medicines used in Palliative Care

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Patient information

Because every day matters

www.hospiscare.co.uk

Registered charity no. 297798



Hospiscare

Caring in the heart of Devon

Why do I need more information about my medication?

Many medicines are supplied with a “patient information leaflet”. This can provide a great deal of information about the medicine, its uses and side effects. Sometimes medicines can have more than one effect on the body. Palliative care doctors have found that certain medicines are safe and effective for symptoms other than those recommended by the manufacturer. Sometimes, the information you receive from us will not agree with that in the leaflet accompanying the medicine.

This is called ‘unlicensed’ or ‘off-label’ prescribing.

Why are prescribers allowed to prescribe these medicines?

These medicines are not licensed to treat some of the symptoms we use them for. If there is a licensed alternative we will use it. However, specialists are allowed to prescribe unlicensed drugs in palliative care. Up to two thirds of specialist palliative care patients receive medicines for reasons outside the licence. There will be clinical experience or research to support their use.

What are the reasons for unlicensed and/or off-label medicines ?

- To ensure that you have the best possible treatment for your condition, it may sometimes be necessary for unlicensed medicines to be prescribed.
- There may be no other effective treatment available.
- Clinical trials and research may have shown that this medicine is

the best for your condition but the manufacturer has not yet applied for a licence, or they may be in the process of having a licence granted.

- Syringe pumps are often used to deliver medication under the skin to control symptoms. Mixing medicines within the syringe driver pump makes the resulting mixture unlicensed. There is considerable data and evidence to support this practice. This does not mean they are unsafe.

Are unlicensed and/or off-label medicines safe to use?

Your prescriber should consider all medical evidence available before prescribing an unlicensed medication. No medicine is completely free from side effects and your prescriber will balance any risk of these against any benefits you may get, in discussion with you.

Who can I contact for more information?

If you have any questions, please feel free to discuss these with any member of your Hospiscare team.

Hospiscare is a charity

If you live in Exeter, Mid or East Devon, Hospiscare is your local adult hospice charity. Should you or a loved one need care for any type of terminal illness, our professional team of doctors and nurses are here to help. If you would like to make a contribution towards the charity, please visit the website to donate www.hospiscare.co.uk or contact us on 01392 688020. A gift to Hospiscare in your Will helps to ensure the future of the charity in Devon for years to come.

Tell us about your experience of Hospiscare

Hospiscare welcomes feedback, compliments and complaints and we use them to develop our staff and services.

We know the majority of people have a positive experience, but encourage all your feedback, positive or negative. We investigate complaints thoroughly and treat them as an opportunity to learn and improve our practice.

To tell us about your experience of Hospiscare, please contact:

Director of Care

Hospiscare, Searle House, Dryden Road, Exeter EX2 5JJ

Phone: 01392 688000

Should you make a complaint, we will send you a letter or email with details of any investigation with an expected timescale where possible. If you wish to see a copy of Hospiscare's Complaints Policy, please ask. If you are dissatisfied with our response you can contact:

The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman

Millbank Tower, Millbank, London SW1P 4QP

Email: phso.enquiries@ombudsman.org.uk

Customer Helpline Tel: 0345 015 4033

Let us know if you would like the information in this leaflet in a different format; for example in large print or spoken word.

Hospiscare is registered by: Care Quality Commission, 151 Buckingham

Palace Road, LONDON SW1W 9SZ www.cqc.org.uk

JC 03/2021 Version 1

Hospiscare, Searle House, Dryden Road, Exeter, EX2 5JJ

Telephone: 01392 688000 Fax: 01392 495981

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