

## Medicines Management Prescribing Focus – February 2022

### Steroid Emergency Card for Adults – Update

In August 2020 NHS Improvement issued a National Patient Safety Alert that required patients on long term steroids, or who have received frequently repeated courses of short-term steroids, to be given a Steroid Emergency Card (SEC) to carry with them at all times and to present on admission to hospital.

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/national-patient-safety-alert-steroid-emergency-card-to-support-early-recognition-and-treatment-of-adrenal-crisis-in-adults/>

In October 2020 the CCG made this alert the subject of a prescribing focus:

<https://northyorkshireccg.nhs.uk/clinical-portal/medicines-and-prescribing/monthly-prescribing-focus/>

The alert was prompted following a number of incidents where patients had not received their usual steroid medication on admission to hospital and/or had not received appropriate additional steroid therapy for acute illness.

All patients with primary adrenal insufficiency are steroid dependent. In addition, some patients who take oral, inhaled or topical steroids for other medical conditions may develop secondary adrenal insufficiency and become steroid dependent.

Since the publication of the original alert and associated guidance in 2020, further advice on the specific doses of inhaled and topical steroids (for adults) which necessitate the carrying of a steroid emergency card have been published by both the Specialist Pharmacy Service (SPS) and by PrescQIPP.

To consolidate the guidance in the original alert with these further documents, the MMT have developed a poster (attached) with our Trust colleagues to clarify for prescribers and dispensers when a SEC should be given to a patient. In some instances, where there is a lack of hard evidence and/or the two sets of national guidance differ, expert opinion has been sought to provide a local decision.

#### **Requested Actions for GP practices:**

- Share the attached poster with all staff in the practice who may prescribe, dispense or re-authorise medication
- Ensure that prescribers issue a SEC to all eligible patients, including those on inhaled or nasal steroids at or above the doses specified on the poster
- Health care professionals undertaking medication reviews (e.g., when authorising repeat prescriptions) should ensure all eligible patients prescribed steroids have had their dose assessed, and where necessary issue a SEC
- The issuing of a card by a GP practice should be coded in the clinical system. SNOMED are due to release 8 new codes to record the issuing of an SEC, but the existing codes of 'STC1 steroid treatment card' or 'Steroid treatment card issued' may be used until the new codes are released into the clinical systems

- It will assist our secondary care colleagues if eligible patients have a code on their record indicating steroid therapy which can be seen on the SCR; this provides an additional prompt on admission to hospital e.g., H/O: steroid therapy 14P2 SNOMED 161648003.
- Community pharmacies and GP practices should ensure they supply Steroid Emergency Cards to relevant patients. They should also replace those lost by patients or which become damaged. Supplies of the card can be ordered from Primary Care Support England via their online portal:  
<https://secure.pcse.england.nhs.uk/forms/pcsssignin.aspx>
- Alternatively, a pdf version of the new card has been sent out with this topic

The MMT welcomes further ideas and suggestions that you and colleagues may wish to recommend for future topics. Additionally for any queries or feedback on this topic please contact the respective teams via [nyccg.rxline@nhs.net](mailto:nyccg.rxline@nhs.net) (North Yorkshire) or [VOYCCG.Rxline@nhs.net](mailto:VOYCCG.Rxline@nhs.net) (Vale of York).

Many thanks,

**North Yorkshire and Vale of York CCGs Medicines Management Teams**