New Proposals to Extend Prescribing or Supply and Administration of Medicines Powers to More Healthcare Professionals

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New proposals to allow paramedics, dieticians, radiographers and orthoptists to prescribe or supply and administer medicines to patients have been published today.

The proposals, which would apply across the UK, would enable the four groups of registered allied health professions (AHP) to prescribe or supply and administer medicines, giving patients responsive access to treatment.

For many patients an AHP is their lead clinician, yet they often do not have access to the appropriate prescribing or supply and administration of medicines mechanisms. This means the patient may have to make an additional appointment with their GP or doctor to get the medicines they need.

The proposals would enable new ways of working to make better use of AHPs' skills, providing a more efficient and convenient service for patients while reducing demand on other services.

The consultations cover:

- Independent prescribing by radiographers
- Independent prescribing by paramedics
- Supplementary prescribing by dieticians
- Use of exemptions within the Human Medicines Regulations by orthoptists.

In September 2014, the Welsh Government announced new powers for physiotherapists, chiropodists and podiatrists to prescribe or supply and administer medicines to patients, making it easier for their patients to receive the treatment they need in a timely manner. Today's proposals are expected to have the same impact.

Health and Social Services Minister, Mark Drakeford said:

"This is an important consultation, which will allow a wider range of health professionals to prescribe, supply and administer medicines for patients.

"The changes will lead to another significant change in the way the NHS in Wales works and will mean the better use of highly-trained health professionals so patients benefit from quicker access to the medications they need."

Four separate consultations have been launched today by NHS England in partnership with the devolved administrations, the Department of Health in England and the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency.

The consultations have been posted on NHS England's consultation hub website atwww.engage.england.nhs.uk

The consultations on proposals to introduce independent prescribing by radiographers and paramedics will run for 12 weeks from 26 February to 22 May 2015. The consultations on the proposals relating to dieticians and orthoptists will run for eight weeks from 26 February to 24 April 2015.

-Ends-

Note to Editors

The allied health professions (AHP) prescribing and medicines supply mechanisms scoping project (2009) provided evidence that extension of prescribing and medicines supply for certain allied health professions would:

- Improve the patient experience by allowing patients improved access, convenience and choice
- Improve patient safety
- Increase capacity and potentially reduce costs

- Empower clinicians
- Support local commissioning of innovation in service delivery

In many clinical pathways, the AHP is the lead clinician, yet they are unable to maximise the effectiveness of patient care because they do not have access to the appropriate prescribing mechanisms. Providing greater flexibility through these mechanisms would ensure a more flexible frontline workforce, capable of leading the development of innovative, new care pathways for the benefit of patients.

An evaluation of independent prescribing by physiotherapists and podiatrists is currently being undertaken by the University of Surrey. It is due to report in early 2016.

Contact:

Martyn Williams

Tel: 029 2082 1823

e-Mail: Martyn.Williams@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Company Contact:

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