



To

Trust Chief Executives for onward dissemination

GPs

Community Pharmacists

November 2016

Dear Colleagues

Re: Generic Prescribing of Levetiracetam

You will be aware of the following report and recommendations of the Commission on Human Medicines (CHM) in July 2013 relating to brand/generic prescribing and switching between formulations of antiepileptic drugs (AEDs).

<http://www.mhra.gov.uk/home/groups/comms-ic/documents/websiteresources/con341226.pdf>

In summary the CHM considered the characteristics of AEDs and advised that they could be classified into three categories based on therapeutic index, solubility and absorption to help prescribers decide whether it was necessary to maintain continuity of supply of a specific manufacturer's product. These three categories are shown below:

- Category 1 - definite concerns e.g. phenytoin, carbamazepine
- Category 2 - possible concerns e.g. lamotrigine, topiramate, valproate
- Category 3 - unlikely to be concerns e.g. levetiracetam, lacosamide, pregabalin gabapentin

The CHM further recommended that for Category 3 no specific measures are normally required and that it is acceptable to prescribe generically unless there is a reason not to (e.g. patient anxiety, risk of confusion being caused by different preparations being taken leading to dosing errors).

In England 80% of levetiracetam is currently prescribed as the generic whereas in Northern Ireland the rate sits at 20%.

The significant differences in cost between the brand and generic are displayed in table one. **A successful switch from brand to generic levetiracetam in 30% of patients in Northern Ireland would result in efficiency savings of £750,000 per annum.**

Table 1: Costs of Generic/Branded levetiracetam

Product	Cost of Brand	Cost of Generic*
Levetiracetam 250mg tablets 60	£28.01	£2.13
Levetiracetam 500mg tablets 60	£49.32	£3.35
Levetiracetam 750mg tablets 60	£84.02	£4.25
Levetiracetam 1000mg tablets 60	£95.34	£6.41
Levetiracetam 100mg/ml oral solution SF x 300 ml	£66.95	£6.21

*NI Drug Tariff September 2016

In light of the CHM advice and the huge potential for efficiency savings, the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) has taken the decision to **encourage generic prescribing of levetiracetam in appropriate patients**, on a case-by-case basis.

This activity forms part of the DoH Regional Efficiency Programme 'Boost' workstream which seeks to drive the implementation of cost effective choices in secondary care to realise savings in Trusts as well as amplifying efficiencies in primary care.

Therefore all prescribers are asked to consider switching suitable patients at review to the generic form of levetiracetam. Community pharmacists have an important role in reassuring patients about this change in their medication.

Support materials have been developed and are available at the links below:

http://primarycare.hscni.net/PharmMM_Resources_Clinical%20Resources_Generics.htm (GP Practices)

<http://niformulary.hscni.net/PatientZone/Epilepsy/Pages/default.aspx> (Public access – if asked for credentials click cancel)

Yours sincerely



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